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THE NOVELS AND ROMANCES

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

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VOLUME ONE

The Novels and Romances of ALPHONSE DAUDET

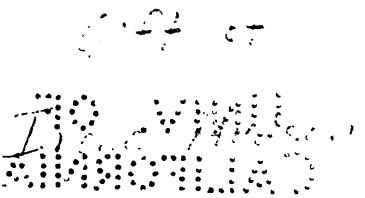
JACK

VOLUME ONE

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INTRODUCTION.

TOWARDS the end of 1868[1] Daudet first saw him — a shivering, round-shouldered, pathetic figure, whose ill-fitting coat covered but scantily the narrow chest racked by an ominous cough. In Paris, where the sight of wretchedness and want and disease is too familiar to arrest even a momentary attention, such a figure as this might have passed on unnoticed, lost in that great stream of human life that overflows the pavements of the mighty city. Clothed in picturesque rags, it might perhaps have served some artist in search of a model, but the novelist could scarcely have singled out so familiar a figure to be the hero of a novel. Had Daudet himself first met this unfortunate in the streets of Paris, it is doubtful whether *Jack* would have been written at all.

But it was at Champrosay they met, Champrosay which plays no small part in Daudet's life, and is mentioned lovingly in connection with his labors. To what chance they owed their acquaintance we do not know, but for a time they were neighbors. We remember with what tireless patience that

[1] *Jack* was first published in 1876.

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"double" of Daudet's attached itself to some obscure existence, following it up and down, penetrating its joys and sorrows, abstracting its secret. Like George Eliot, like Dickens, he delighted in being the historian of the humble.

He has told us elsewhere the history of Little What's-His-Name. Quite another story — that of his young companion, told to him in the forest of Sénart, afterwards retold to the world as Daudet alone could tell it — the story of Jack.

His real name we do not know, for he had none — this is the story of little No-name, the mere flyblow of chance, born of a father whose name even was not known — of a mother known only too well, an origin clouded with doubt and shame.

The jealous caprice of a lover of this woman had sentenced him to a life of physical labor for which he was unfitted; he had broken down under the strain, and, when Daudet first met him, had been sent to the country to rest for a while, and regain health. Even there he was pursued by thoughts of his mother, and when his exile grew unendurable, he would set out afoot, and walk the six leagues that separated him from her, for he adored this mother.

A portion of his childhood had been spent in a wealthy *pensionnat* at Auteuil, and that early education, though it had not lasted long, had left an influence upon his character, and had given him tastes out of keeping with the squalid surroundings of his life. He loved to read, and as the doctor

had forbidden all manual labor he spent long days devouring Daudet's books, keeping him silent company while he worked. Looking out upon the green fields, the peaceful river, he would say: "I can understand better when I am here."

Instinctively he appropriated the best books had to give him, making it his own. Daudet led him to talk of them, of his past, and of the factory life he had led. Certain incidents of factory life at Indret described later in *Jack* are merely the souvenirs of those apprentice days.

Chance, which had brought the two together, soon separated them, the writer returning to Paris, "Jack" finding work upon the Lyons railroad. Daudet saw him only at rare intervals, and each time he appeared thinner, weaker, more despairing, crushed beneath the hopelessness of his struggle, wearied with a task that left every higher faculty unemployed. Yet he would not leave his work, fearing to pain and disappoint his mother, and no one, himself least of all, realized how critical his condition really was.

So months passed. One day, Daudet tells us, there arrived a little note, pathetic in its brevity, written in a tremulous hand: "Sick at La Charité, Salle de Saint Jean de Dieu." There the writer found him, lying upon a stretcher, there being no bed for him. As much, perhaps, to divert him from his own suffering and wretchedness as for any other reason, Daudet asks him to write his impressions of the life about him. A little later

these articles were published; picture the joy of little No-name upon receiving the few louis his work brought him, the first money he had earned with his pen!

He left the hospital, but not fully recovered. Recalling how much he himself had been benefited by an utter change of scene and climate, Daudet wrote to Algiers, and obtained for his protégé a minor position to which very slight duties and a salary of fifteen hundred francs were attached. Filled with gratitude and joy, eagerly planning the writing of new articles, the boy took leave of Daudet and his wife, never to meet them again.

In Algiers a friend of Daudet's opened his doors wide to the young exile. His health did not mend rapidly, but the freedom of his new life was a joy and inspiration. Writing to Daudet at this time of all he felt, he says, naïvely: "It seems to me as if I were in Heaven!"

Then came the Days of the Siege, filled with events of such sad and ever-memorable significance. Daudet was not the mere passive spectator of these events. He had almost forgotten his young charge, when a letter from Jack's physician brought a painful reminder of his protégé's existence. "Jack" was very ill, the letter stated, and begged for some news of his mother.

To the mother also an appeal was sent, but no reply.

"Jack" died in the hospital at Algiers after a

long and agonizing illness. He had refused to allow Daudet's friend to care for him in the latter's home, fearing to become a burden, and realizing that this was indeed his last illness. At the last, speaking to this friend of Daudet, he said: "Tell him now that I am leaving life, I regret most of all to leave him and his dear wife."

Such, in brief, are the meagre details of the life of the real Jack, as narrated by Daudet himself, who knew him best. A single paragraph of a daily newspaper might almost tell the story which later Daudet chose to amplify, modifying the circumstances but slightly in writing the longest work that has come from his pen. That life in itself seems scarcely more than a little obscure page, blotted and half obliterated by human tears, merely a stray leaflet, detached from the great Book of human history. For a time it must have seemed to Daudet merely that — something too personal, too painful to talk about or write about.

But one day he finds himself telling this story to a friend, Gustave Droz. Perhaps something in the simplicity, the sincerity with which the bare details were told, may have touched the friend, for he suggested that Daudet tell to the world the story of Jack.

Did Daudet really need this suggestion? Had not Jack's story been shaping itself unconsciously in his brain from that day when he first met him? Had not his "double" been taking notes from the very moment of their meeting? Though imagina-

tion plays so large a part in his work, he first lived the events that later took literary shape in his brain.

It is characteristic of Daudet that he suddenly becomes so possessed with the idea of *Jack*, that to follow the latter's fortunes he flings aside the work at which he had been so busily engaged. And what is the book he lays aside, with fine disregard of consequences? The most brilliant perhaps of all his novels — the Parisian's *Vanity Fair* — *The Nabob!* Even De Mora's portrait must wait while he plunges headlong, heart and soul, into the story of Jack!

What is the quality of qualities obvious even to the most superficial reader of *Jack?* Note the remorseless subtlety of perception, the ironic delicacy of touch with which De Mora's portrait is painted, neither sparing nor extenuating — that "double" of Daudet's taking notes even in the chamber which Death has entered before him.

Contrast such portrayal of character with the story of Jack. The latter is a labor of love. Daudet really loves this Jack whose history he tells, and cannot permit his reader to lose sight of the fact even for a moment. When he presents to you Ida's Jack (with a K,) dressed grotesquely *à l'anglaise*, bare-legged and shivering, his lank limbs betraying all the awkwardness of growing youth in revolt, he refers to the boy in terms of endearment. He wishes that every one should love as he loves "*ce cher petit.*" Daudet the loving and the lovable

betrays himself in every page that chronicles the life of his hero. These interpolations are so much a part of the narrative that they hardly interrupt it, though they do not aid it. He does not, like one of his English brothers, interpolate a page of dissertation upon the vanity of human life, nor, like another of our English novelists, pause in the narrative to preach a sermon. It is never as preacher or moralist that Daudet peers over your shoulder. But the quality that reveals itself in his work is none the less a purely personal one; he loves this humble being, whose biographer he is, so intensely that he must identify himself with each mood of the boy. — He follows him everywhere, penetrating every experience of Jack's, every phase of feeling, with that subtle clairvoyance which makes the very soul of things transparent to him at times. He identifies himself with the life of childhood, all its miracle and mystery; no real or imaginary terror that exists in a child's mind but Daudet seeks to fathom it. A child's homesickness and loneliness and dread of the darkness its fancy peoples with vague shapes, how real they are! That journey by night from Paris to Étiolles, is it Jack's or his own? Hard to say, so completely Daudet merges his own personality in that of the child. This personal quality, often accompanied by an almost feminine sensibility, is a dangerous gift, but here it produced pictures most vivid and real.

Daudet's theories were widely at variance

with those of the writer to whom he dedicated *Jack;* the doctrine of "impersonality" had no charm for him, was foreign to his temperament, and he wisely realized this. Yet, however he differed from his friends in theory, his own method of work led him to be as ardent a realist as any one of these. But what realism! Realism that has filtered through the imagination, leaving the dregs behind so that the bright, limpid resultant is a far different thing from the realism of Zola — not of the earth earthy — rather, a jewel darting lambent fires, the very crystallization of Daudet's thought and feeling.

With painful persistence he follows Jack to the final scene of his martyrdom, the slave of a sort of obsession that will not permit him to rest so long as there remains the least small island of Jack's personality unexplored. His life in the forge, aboard the "Cydnus," in the Eyssendeck factory, his degradation and effacement, the final enfranchisement and new birth of his soul, Daudet's "double" has seen it all, and is not less assiduous than Zola himself in his pilgrimages to every remote nook that may throw light upon the subject, yet his narrative never becomes the mere itinerary of scenes and events.

"*Un livre de pitié, de colère, et d'ironie,*" says Daudet of *Jack* in this dedication to Gustave Flaubert, and that Flaubert found somewhat too much of these qualities in *Jack* is gathered from his laconic criticism, hardly the words of one who

stands sponsor for the work of a contemporary, a criticism we should never have known, perhaps, save for the confession of Daudet himself, given with that naïve candor which is one of the many delightful qualities of *Trente Ans de Paris.* Neither can the author of *Jack* resist telling us that George Sand was so moved upon ending the book that for three days she was unable to resume work, or write a single line!

What has been the popular verdict? The longest, the most rapidly written of Daudet's novels, a labor of love, had no such reception as that which greeted *Fromont and Risler, The Nabob, Tartarin,* and other of Daudet's works. He inferred that its length was the cause of this colder reception. May there not be other reasons? Too much truth, like too little learning, may sometimes prove a dangerous gift for its possessor. To strip the mask from cant and vice and pretentious folly, to show these things in their least alluring light is hardly the way to achieve an overwhelming popular success; a "book of pity, of anger, and of irony," is an uncertain power with which to conjure the multitudes. *Jack* can never appeal to the lovers of pleasing fiction. It is a serious, perhaps too sombre, study of the life and morals of a great modern Cosmopolis where vice and virtue jostle each other, flourish side by side. It probes social wounds and evils, unveils shams, punctures with the fine pen-pricks of its irony foibles and painted bubbles of folly. Its satire is juster, more far-

reaching and impersonal than that of the *Immortal.* The Academic few could never have been greatly disturbed by the attack upon their venerable Academy, but Philistinism, dilettanteism, and indeed the whole tedious, dismal and deadly tribe of isms may well take umbrage at *Jack*, for Tartarin's creator has here a more Herculean labor than that of helping Tartarin to hunt lions; he is hunting down the ass in the lion's skin, ever a thankless task, more quixotic even than that of pummelling windmills. Yet he does it in good faith, strikes again and again at vacancy, like Cyrano crying to Hypocrisy and Compromise and Prejudice, to "bloated and pompous silliness"—to platitudes of every sort: "Take this! and this!"

Jack is scarcely a novel in the strict sense of the word, rather a biography around which is woven a series of social and satiric studies, of pictures from life. Invention plays but a minor part in the work; Daudet did not have to go in search of types or of scenes or of events. He had merely to remember, to draw upon those mental note-books filled to overflowing with observations and suggestions, notes jotted down without attempt at classification, hid away in compartments whose labels even were undecipherable to any but himself, but of which he had the key, entering at will, appropriating, never at random, just what he needed at the right moment.

But woe to the lesser writer who should attempt to imitate Daudet's method! The most curious

archives are of value only in the hands of the few. Facts have no real significance of themselves, though the least detail has a value for the romancer who knows how to use it rightly. The finer the tool, the greater must be the skill of the workman who handles it. Though Daudet's notes were copious, he instinctively fixed upon those details that were of real significance, and the slightest detail in his hands sometimes becomes the flashlight in which a whole personality stands revealed.

The characters he has painted in *Jack*, however familiar or commonplace, however grotesque, are never mere caricatures. They exist. They have always existed; in a certain sense they are typical. Since Jack is a failure, it is natural that the Failures themselves should play no small part in the history. This is conspicuously the Book of Failures, and they bear the same relation to the main theme that the Greek Chorus sustains to the Tragedy. What a formidable array of them! Failures of art, of science, of literature! (We have in English no word quite flexible, ironic, delicate enough to suggest to our ears all that is conveyed to a Frenchman's sense in the term *un Raté*. It quivers with suppressed irony. It may characterize anything spoilt, lost, abortive, any of Life's numerous miscarriages or misfits.) What a host of these *Ratés* wander through the pages of *Jack!* — all Bohemia is for a time depopulated. Here are the Chauvins, the Delobelles, the Micawbers of destiny,

a whole wretched race of human beings nursing in their dazed brains gigantic but abortive schemes for destroying law and order, for reconstructing a howling primeval Chaos, and turning the world topsy-turvy! Here is the doctor without a diploma — the reviewer without a review, the schoolmistress without a school, the poet without a publisher, the mighty voiced opera singer who is compelled to sing secondary rôles only because of a grudge the manager bears him! Then the lesser Failures — the workman who never works, but is never seen without his hammer and carpenter's apron, insignia of labor. There is the man who is nothing of himself, but is Somebody's Nephew; there is the man who never says anything, but has achieved a local reputation because he has read Proudhon. Impossible even to enumerate them all.

Poor, half-starved, shabby, often disreputable, ready to spring up from every pavement of Paris to follow a funeral or some function less sombre, they trudge bravely from one end of Paris to the other, never quite so hopeless as they seem, since their eyes are still blinded by the golden scales of Chimaera, and they can still view life through the rose-tinted mists of illusion. Happy Failures! One confesses, after all is said, to a sneaking fondness for them, and suspects that for once Daudet's irony overshot the mark, and that they are neither as formidable nor as ridiculous as they seem, even though they are not sleek and well-fed, pious and

proper, and at times, like the Son of Man, have not where to lay their heads. Failure, like success, judged by ultimate standards, is merely a relative thing.

In strong contrast to these is the simple character of the unworldly old doctor and his granddaughter. The episode of Zénaïde and her brigadier, whom Daudet transports bodily, name and all, to the pages of his novel, forms a charming idyll, all the more refreshing because of the contrast it presents to the sombre drama enacted before the hearth of old Father Roudic, reminding one in the simplicity and pathos of its dénouement of those final chapters which make *Fromont and Risler* so terrible.

Among the typical characters of *Jack*, two stand in bolder relief than the rest; the subtlest, most delicate touches of his irony Daudet has reserved for Ida de Barancy, *soi-disant comtesse*, and her Vicomte. This unique pair will live while French literature lasts as the hero and heroine of the most respectable liaison that has ever graced the pages of a French novel! The pair do not make their only appearance in these pages. Readers of *Artists' Wives* will remember the poet with the light gloves and the Olympian brow, the curled, pommaded, perfumed *élégant* whose touching line:

"For I believe in Love as I believe in God,"

is the enticing bait which tempts the little bourgeoise to nibble. In that sketch, however, the heroine

wearies even of a poet who wears light gloves and believes in love as he believes in God! and after a season returns to her legitimate protector, a wiser if not a better woman. But in the "book of irony" Daudet handles the theme with a finer sense of the ludicrous, and binds this pair together for life with chains forged by imbecility on the one hand and egotism on the other. The executioner and his victim, each is necessary for the other.

The Vicomte renames his countess Charlotte, in memory of Goethe's Charlotte — (doubtless, too, he had discovered a strong resemblance between himself and Goethe). Sacred memory of Charlotte von Stein! What had that illustrious, highly accomplished and deeply intellectual Lady of Weimar in common with this vulgar, inane bit of French frailty that he should have named it for her? But the amenities of literature are many. Madame von Stein was a German, and Daudet never forgave the Germans for entering Paris!

Even the Vicomte himself seems to realize at times that this name of Charlotte was strikingly inappropriate for his slave — for he shortens it to Lolotte (which is also French for "frailty").

Amaury d'Argenton is not a special product of French life and literature, he is rather that relentless ego which masquerades under many disguises, but remains the type of the everlasting *poseur*. Hardly as subtle a creature as the Egoist of George Meredith, for the machinery which sets the puppet in

motion is not at all complex, and he is quite transparent to all save himself and his countess.

The Failures naturally revolve around Amaury, his faithful satellites, for he is the most stupendous failure of them all. Does their homage and his reception of it sound exaggerated to the reader? Let him read that delicious paper of Rod's, *Hugo et Nos Contemporains*, where the reception of an ode of the poet is touchingly described:

"How characterize such a poem by such mediocre words as 'admirable,' 'superb,' 'marvellous'? — Impossible!

"And so there is a silence of some moments, then the inner worshippers approach. They kiss his hands. They raise their eyes to Heaven. To the amazement of some of the uninitiated, this word echoes through the salon:

"'Cathedral!'

"Another orator exclaims:

"'Gothic arch!'

"Still a third, glancing around him:

"'Egyptian Pyramid!'"

Such the amenities of a French salon. Verily, it is not possible to exaggerate human nature.

Perhaps no one of Daudet's characters shows more of the method and motive of what he wrought than Ida de Barancy. How is her personality revealed? By one of those slight touches which lays bare the inmost nature of the woman.

"Par un *K*, monsieur le supérieur, par un *K*.

Le nom s'écrit et se prononce à l'anglaise, comme ceci, Djack."

Thus she introduces herself. Her child's real name and future are matters of supreme indifference to her, but that his name is spelt *à l'anglaise*, with a K, is a matter of real moment!

With all her inanities, her amiable smile, her shallowness, this voluble, volatile creature is a very typical bit of femininity.

Daudet's delineation of the Modern Woman has gone deeper than the mere surface. His types are various, but each one adds something to our knowledge of that complex, constantly varying, many-sided problem. Except George Meredith and Balzac, no modern novelist, perhaps, has handled this topic more skilfully, or with greater variety. He has shown us in Claire Fromont the dignity of wifehood. He has shown in Désirée how love could transfigure the little workgirl — a nature so pure and tender and faithful that it cannot conceive of evil or wrong, and perishes of very sorrow when the bitter knowledge is rudely thrust upon it. He has pictured in Frédérique, the noblest perhaps of all his creations, the queen struggling with the woman, the mother for supremacy — the mother, the woman finally conquering the queen. Very real women, all of these. As he has painted virtue he has not hesitated to paint vice — but stripped of every last vestige of ornament. Side by side with Désirée is Sidonie, coldly vicious to the core, to whom vice is merely a means of

attaining an end, and that end the gratification of a nature so cruel and sordid and false that it might have been transparent even to so ingenuous a nature as Risler's.

In *Sappho* another type, the woman frankly, openly, brutally corrupt, because it is the law and necessity of her being.

In Ida still another type — the creature of chance and impulse, to whom vice is quite as much an accident as virtue. Her bird-like brain is incapable of understanding the nature of either. There is neither motive nor premeditation in the evil she does, no consciousness of wrong — yet in spite of her amiable smile, she is far more terrible than Sidonie or Sappho — this mother in name merely, the unconscious cause of her son's life-long martyrdom, his Nemesis and final executioner. Why is she so terrible? Because of that accident or fatality which intrusts to this shallow, helpless, scatterbrained creature a destiny greater than her own. It is impossible to read Daudet without carrying away his conviction as to the purpose and meaning of maternity. It is the divine Seal of Godhead, set upon the eternally Feminine, hallowing it, investing it with new graciousness. We have the culmination of that thought in Frédérique, where the mother is a Queen! We see another presentation of the same thought in *Jack* where the mother is a courtesan. She is terrible because of that which makes Frédérique great and gracious, the mere fact of

her maternity. After a fashion of her own she loves her Jack (with a K), is ever ready to caress him, and at last slays him. There is grim and terrible truth in this picture; it is significant too because it indicates Daudet's attitude towards certain real issues of modern living.

The *fin-de-siècle* novel or romance is a very different thing from that of the past. The problem has not changed but the presentation of it has made vast strides. Who dares predict what will be the novel of the future? But this is certain, any picture of society which paints it only in glowing colors, and has to do only with "the good, the beautiful, the true," is false in so far as it is one-sided. Good and evil exist side by side, the novelist must paint both. What then, makes the difference between two books, both of which treat of the same subject? It is an indefinable difference so intangible it can scarcely be put into words and underlying it is the element of personality, the mental and moral attitude of the writer towards the things he describes. Of this even he himself may be at times unconscious, yet it is a potent factor and force in determining the tendency of a book. What is the characteristic of much of modern romance and realism from Gautier to D'Annunzio? Not that it deals with forbidden topics, but the method and the wherefore of its dealings with these things at all. The literature of latter-day decadence is more brilliant, more striking in wealth of imagery than any litera-

ture which has preceded it; it glitters with a bewildering succession of sensuous images; life, warmth, color, none of these are lacking. Every means which art has at its command is enlisted to throw over the pages a glamor none shall be able to resist. There shall be music, odors, dimly lighted, perfumed boudoirs — whole reams of scented literature — all of which incidental to the breaking of the Seventh Commandment or the mere chronicling of a seduction. It may be that the hero and heroine of the romance will tire of each other in the last chapter, and seek escape from each other, and relief from their over-strained nerves by rushing madly down an embankment and wildly colliding with a swift locomotive — but before this gruesome *dénouement* is reached there is much meanwhile of real interest, a veritable feast of the senses, while the hero and heroine warble their love-duet to the passionate strains of *Tristan and Isolde!* Art, music, science, mysticism, moonshine, and mist, all are love's purveyors in the romance of the decadence.

But stripped of all its finery and frippery, the final expression of all this highly-spiced literature is a pessimism so deep that it penetrates and paralyzes the reason, the affections, the will, — virtue becomes a name; goodness a mere accident; Love is merely a surprise of the senses; nothing certain but Death and its final triumph. Meanwhile — Enjoy! Such at least seems to be the creed of much of decadent literature.

Contrast with all this Daudet's method born of his convictions. Master of style, colorist and artist through and through, what a glamor of illusion he might have lent to the picture of evil. He did not, because it would have been false to his temperament, his mental attitude towards these things. He sees vice naked, stripped of its ornaments, when he sees it at all, and as he sees he paints it. The picture is coarse at times, vulgar, the words jar upon a sensitive ear, but the picture is true. It is the grim realism of *Sappho*, of *Jack*, that made both these books profoundly moral. Unconsciously or not, Daudet asserts a great truth, that in the triumph of the will itself lies the true supremacy of a soul, a power in man that can resist time and change — even Death. The tragedy of *Sappho* is embodied in the final impotence and effacement of the man's will, drugged and paralyzed through the senses. In *Jack* there is the final enfranchisement of a soul in which the will with every higher faculty is awakened through love. True, Jack was foredoomed from his birth to failure and defeat, what then? Daudet's healthy optimism refuses to accept failure as final.

"What we believe in waits latent forever."

"Did we think victory great?
So it is — But now it seems to me, when it cannot be helped, that defeat is great,
And that death and dismay are great."

"Defeat, poverty, imprisonment, they too are great."

So chants the Singer of the Democracy. Daudet's *Jack* echoes that strong swift strain of music. Sombre enough this book of pity, irony, and anger, but underneath its minor music the deeper note is sounded, the strain of triumph, Daudet's healthy optimism claiming for little No-name the promise of eternity! It is this optimism that redeems the pathos and pain of the whole work by a final touch of the sublime.

There is nothing more characteristic of Daudet than that last chapter of *Jack*. The mother in her furs, her velvet, and laces, radiant at having been seen in public with her poet, is dragged to the death-bed of her son. In a few lines is shown all the contrast between that warm, soft, well-fed, well-clothed comfort-loving body of hers and that of her child wasted by disease. A sudden touch lays bare the soul too of this woman. On the threshold of death she hesitates, dares not enter. "I am afraid," she says. (Imagine Frédérique afraid to watch by her son's bedside! Can you?) The sturdy, rough, good-hearted daughter of the people shoves this bunch of feathers and fur and furbelows brutally ahead. "Come, come, you must," she says; "really such women as you ought never to have children."

Then she stands in her son's presence, calls him by name. There is an indistinct murmur, a little plaintive hissing sound, and then a deep sigh.

The executioner's work is done; she stands be-

fore her victim and dares not move a step further, dares not look even upon her own work.

"The mother utters a terrible cry: 'Dead?'"

The old, familiar, final word — the great word pregnant with the despair of all the centuries — the Word solemn, sonorous, awful, even upon the lips of this woman.

The superficial points of resemblance between Daudet's work and that of Dickens are so obvious that the least observant reader must remark them; Dickens himself laughingly referred to the great Frenchman as his "little brother"! But note the distinction and the difference. There is a moralist in Dickens that must expatiate upon the main theme, and point a moral to adorn a tale. When he has led little Jo through the Valley, and light is come upon the dark, benighted way, he is not content with his own achievement, cannot leave it there. He mounts the pulpit, and pounds it vigorously, with that clarion: "Dead, your majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, right Reverends and wrong Reverends of every order" — et cetera! What is all this, if not anti-climax?

For Jack too, baffled and defeated, the light is shining, but for the reverent historian of little No-name, the majesty of the mere Presence he has invoked awes even his "double" into silence.

And the old doctor too, often so choleric and combative, not sparing of words — can you not seem to see his fine old weather-beaten face suddenly shining with a light shed from the great

Beyond, with a consciousness of something very rich and new and strange?

He stands face to face with the wretched woman whose heart and conscience, dimly and dumbly stirring within her, accuse and convict her, the murderess of her son. He too might accuse her. He does not.

And when she cries "Dead?" — "No, no," answers the old doctor sternly, — "not death — DELIVERANCE!"

There are lesser pages of *Jack*, but that last touch of the sublime is the finer flowering of that which for want of a better word we term Genius. It is the selfsame genius whose threefold gift of light and laughter and tears has touched the human heart again and again.

Whatever else is true of Genius, this at least is certain, it shall not taste death! Press within the pages of a book so slight a thing as one single leaf of laurel or even that lesser thing, a Rose; let it lie forgotten for centuries; when the hand that hid it has crumbled into dust, some one shall open the book. Though the leaf is faded, and the rose too is dust, there shall linger still about these things the fine faint sweetness of the laurel and the rose.

And that perfume which clings about the last pages of that sad, obscure history of little No-name? — the perfume, dear reader, is the Soul of Alphonse Daudet!

MARIAN McINTYRE.

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JACK.

PART I.

I.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

"WITH a *K*, Monsieur le Supérieur, with a *K*. In English the name is written and pronounced *Djack*. The child's godfather was an Englishman, Lord Peambock, a major-general in the Indian army. You have heard of him perhaps? A most distinguished gentleman, and of the highest rank! Oh, you understand, Monsieur l'Abbé, the highest rank — and such a waltzer! But he is dead — killed two years ago in a dreadful fashion, during a tiger-hunt which a rajah, one of his friends, held in his honor. Those rajahs are real monarchs, it seems. The one of whom I speak is especially famous in that country. Now, what was his name? Let me see! Good heavens! I have that name at the end of my tongue. Rana — Rama — "

"Pardon, madame," interrupted the rector, smiling in spite of himself at this volubility of speech, and her incessant jumping from one idea to another. "And after 'Jack' what shall we write?"

Leaning upon his desk where he had been writing a few moments before, his head slightly inclined, the worthy priest directed a keen, suspicious, searching glance, full of ecclesiastic penetration, towards the young woman seated before him, her Jack (with a *K*) standing at her side.

She was an elegant creature, irreproachably gowned, in the very height of fashion — it was then December, 1858; the softness of her furs, the richness of her black dress, the discreet originality of her bonnet, revealed the luxurious ease of a woman who has a carriage, and passes from her fresh carpets to the cushions of her brougham, without suffering vulgar contact with the street.

She had the small head which adds to the apparent height of a woman; the contour of her face was velvety as a fruit, the countenance mobile and smiling, lighted by clear, naïve eyes, and very white teeth, which were displayed upon every possible occasion. This mobility of her features was extreme, and something in her amiable physiognomy, perhaps it was the lower lip, slightly relaxed through constant talkativeness, perhaps the narrow forehead, bordered by the glossy bands of her hair, indicated the absence of reflection, and explained those open parentheses of such frequent occurrence in the conversation of this pretty woman, reminding one of those tiny Japanese boxes of graduated size, placed one within the other, even to the last and tiniest of them all, which is always empty.

As for the child, imagine a lank boy of seven or eight years, who had grown too rapidly, and was dressed in English fashion in strict keeping with the *K* in his name. His legs were bare, but a plaid and a Scotch cap with silver thistles completed the costume, which was not perhaps too young for his years, though his tall figure and vigorous neck made it look incongruous enough. The boy's chilled, muscular calves shot beyond his grotesque attire with all the awkwardness of growing youth in revolt. They troubled him not a little. Clumsy and timid, never daring to raise his eyes, he cast from time to time a despairing glance towards his bare legs as if in his heart he cursed Lord Peambock and all the Indian army, to whom he was indebted for his absurd costume.

Physically he resembled his mother, but with something finer, more striking in the face, that transformation the features of a pretty woman undergo when the likeness is reproduced in the male and intelligence enlightens them, — the same eyes, but deeper, the same forehead, but larger, the same mouth, but firmer, more serious in its expression.

Across the woman's face ideas and impressions flitted, leaving not a trace, not a wrinkle. One succeeded another, and she herself was so much surprised at the swiftness of their escape, that her eyes never quite lost their expression of astonishment. The child's face, on the contrary, was thoughtful in expression, wore a meditative air which would have been disquieting but for a cer-

tain indolence in his attitude, a droop of the small frame. In his movements was all the timidity, the weakness of a child that has never left the mother's apron-strings.

At this moment he was leaning against her; his hand had slipped into her muff, and he listened to her words, filled with mute admiration. From time to time he watched the priest and all that surrounded him with a curious air full of anxiety and restraint.

He had promised not to cry.

Yet at times a suppressed sigh, half a sob, shook him from head to foot.

Then his mother's gaze was fixed upon him, seeming to say:

"You know what you promised me," — and the child at once stifled both sighing and tears, yet it was evident that he was suffering deeply, — that bitter suffering, that sense of desertion, of exile, which his first boarding-school inspires in a child who has never before left home.

The scrutiny of mother and child which the priest had pursued for some moments would have satisfied a superficial observer; but Father O—, for more than twenty-five years spiritual director of the aristocratic institution of the Jesuits at Vaugirard, was too familiar with the world, with Parisian high-life and all its delicate distinctions of form and language, not to have recognized in the mother of his new pupil a client of a peculiar sort.

The unconcern with which she had entered his

study, was too obtrusive to be genuine. Her manner of seating herself, settling back in her chair, her infantile smile, which seemed somewhat forced, above all, the torrent of words poured forth as if she sought to shelter herself behind them, and conceal an embarrassment caused by some hidden thought, all these things made the priest mistrustful. Unfortunately there is in Paris such a promiscuous mingling of society, so close is the community of pleasures formed by the toilette, the promenade, the dividing line between a lorette of dubious morals and a marquise with none is so very slight that the most expert observer might well be misled at first sight, hence the close attention with which the priest studied this woman.

His observation was somewhat baffled by the incoherence of the conversation. How find a moment's time to reflect in the midst of such whirlings, such sudden bounds, not unlike those of a caged squirrel? Was she endeavoring to lead his judgment astray? In spite of this, it had almost reached a decision when the mother's evident embarrassment at being asked the child's surname, relieved him of all doubt.

She colored, grew confused, hesitated for a second.

"True," she said, "you must excuse me. I forgot to introduce myself. Where were my wits, I wonder?"

And taking from her pocket a tiny case perfumed like a sachet, she drew forth a card on

which was written in elongated characters the fanciful but meaningless name,

IDA DE BARANCY.

The rector smiled strangely.

"And is this the child's name as well?" he asked.

The question was impertinent almost. The lady understood its significance, was more disconcerted than before; but concealed her embarrassment by an assumption of great dignity.

"Why, of course, Monsieur l'Abbé, of course!"

"Ah!" said the priest, very gravely.

It was now his turn to be at loss for words in which to express what he wished to say. He rolled the card between his fingers with the slight tremor of the lips of one who understands fully the weight and the effect of the words he is about to utter.

Suddenly he rose, approached one of the high French windows opening directly upon a garden planted with beautiful trees, and impurpled with the last glow of the winter sun; he tapped one of the panes lightly. A dark outline passed before the windows, and almost immediately a young priest appeared in the study.

"My good Duffieux," said the Superior, "you will take this child for a short walk. Show him our church and our conservatories. The poor little fellow is growing tired."

Jack was certain that the proposed walk was merely a pretext to cut short the painful farewell

of parting, and there were such terror and despair in his eyes that the good priest gently reassured him.

"Do not fear, my little Jack, your mother will not leave you. You shall see her again."

And with a queenly gesture, Madame de Barancy added, "Go, my dear!"

And he went without a murmur, as though life had already reduced him to subjection, and prepared him for every sort of servitude.

After he had left the study, there was silence for a moment. The child's footsteps and his companion's, grating upon the gravel-walk, hardened by frost, sounded farther and farther away; the crackling of the fire was heard, the twittering of sparrows among the branches, the sound of pianos, voices, all the busy murmurs that rise from a large household, the bustle and stir of a great boarding school at study-hour, the sounds muffled somewhat, for the windows were closed, and it was a winter-day.

"This child seems to be very fond of you, madame," said the rector, whom Jack's submissiveness had touched.

"And why should he not be?" responded the mother, a trifle too melodramatically perhaps. "The poor child has no one but his mother in the whole world!"

"Ah! you are a widow."

"Alas, yes! Monsieur le Supérieur. My husband died ten years ago, the very year of our marriage. Ah, Monsieur l'Abbé, those romancers

who travel far and wide in search of adventures for their heroines, never once suspect that the simplest life might furnish material for ten romances. My own is proof of that. You must know; M. le Comte de Barancy belonged, as his name will inform you, to one of the oldest families of Touraine!"

This remark was unfortunate, for the birthplace of Father O— was Amboise, and he was well acquainted with all the nobility of his province. At once his doubt and mistrust were reawakened and in his mind the Comte de Barancy went in search of General Peambock and the Rajah of Singapore, but he did not betray his suspicions, and merely interrupted the *Comtesse, soi-disant,* very gently to remark:

"Do you not agree with me, madame, that it would be a cruel thing to separate from yourself a child who appears to be so attached to you? He is still very young. Has he strength enough to endure such a parting?"

"You are mistaken, monsieur," she responded naïvely. "Jack is a very robust child. He has never had a sick day. He is rather pale, perhaps, but that is merely because of the Paris air, to which he is unaccustomed."

Annoyed to see that she had not caught the gentle hint he had intended to convey, the priest repeated, with emphasis upon each word:

"Moreover, at present our dormitories are all occupied; the scholastic year is already far advanced. We have been compelled to ask some of

our new pupils to wait until next year; I shall have to ask you also to wait until that time. We may then, perhaps, be able to make room for him, but I dare promise nothing."

She understood.

"Then," she asked, growing pale, "you refuse to receive my son? Will you also refuse to tell me why?"

"Madame, I would have given much to avoid this explanation, but since you insist upon it, I must inform you that the house of which I am director, demands exceptional moral conditions of the families whose children are confided to our keeping. There are probably in Paris many lay institutions where your little Jack will receive every care, but with us it is impossible. I beg you will not insist upon further explanation;" he added, in a reply to a gesture of indignant protestation, — "I have not the right to question or reproach you. I regret the pain I must cause you, and, believe me, the harshness of this refusal is as painful to me as to yourself."

While the priest was speaking, Madame de Barancy's face had expressed all the varied emotions of sadness, disdain, and confusion. At first she had endeavored to appear unabashed, sat with head erect, hiding behind a mask of worldliness, but the kindly words of the Rector, penetrating that infantile nature, caused her to break down utterly, and give way to a plaintive outburst of words broken by sobs, and full of noisy abandon.

Ah, yes! she was miserable indeed. No one

would ever know all she had suffered already for that child.

Yes, it was true, the poor little creature had no name, no father; but should he be treated as a criminal because of his misfortune? — was he reponsible for the sin of his parents?

"Ah, Monsieur l'Abbé, Monsieur l'Abbé, I beseech you."

And whilst speaking, with an utter abandonment which might have moved a smile had the situation been less grave, she caught the priest's hand, the beautiful, soft, white hand of a bishop, which the good Father gently endeavored to disengage, not without some embarrassment.

"Calm yourself, my dear lady," he said, alarmed by this effusiveness, and so many tears, for she was weeping like the child she was, with suffocating sobs and all the unreserve of a vulgar nature.

The poor man thought: "Good Heavens, what shall I do if the lady faints?"

But the words with which he attempted to calm her, excited her still more.

She was anxious to justify herself, to explain matters, to tell the story of her life, and willingly or no, the Superior was compelled to follow her through an obscure and interminable narrative into which she plunged and was lost, pausing only for breath, breaking the connecting thread at each step without once pausing to consider how she would find her way out of the labyrinth.

The name of Barancy was not her own. Oh! if she were to tell him her real name he would be

much astonished, but the honor of one of the oldest families of France, one of the very oldest, you understand — was involved, and if she were put to death, none should learn that name from her!

Vainly the Director protested that not for worlds would he wrest that secret from her; he could not even make himself heard. She was set in motion, and easier to stop the sails of a windmill in full swing than to arrest that whirlwind of empty words. The fact she seemed most desirous of proving to him was that she belonged to the highest nobility and that her infamous seducer's coat-of-arms was a "something or other on a — what do you call it?" — and that she herself had been the victim of a most singular fatality.

What was to be believed of all this? Probably not a word, for reticences and contradictions abounded in her incoherent discourse, but there was something sincere, touching even, in the love of this mother for her child. They had always lived together. She had given him teachers at home, and only desired to separate him from herself because his wide-awake eyes and the rapid growth of his intelligence compelled her to take extra precautions.

The priest replied gravely: "The best way would be to guard against all irregularity of life, and make your home worthy of the child who dwells there."

"And that is my one thought, Monsieur l'Abbé," she answered. "As Jack grows older, I find myself

becoming more serious. And besides, some day or other my position may become an established one. Some one has sought my hand for some time, but, meanwhile, I wished to send the child away, to keep him aloof from my troubled life, give him a Christian and aristocratic education which will make him worthy of the great name he ought to bear. I thought that nowhere would he be more certain to receive that education than here, but you forbid it, and at the same time discourage all the good intentions of his mother."

And now the Director himself seemed shaken. He hesitated a moment, then aiming a searching glance towards the mother he said:

"Very well, madame, let it be so. If you insist, I will accede to this wish of yours. I was pleased with little Jack. I consent to receive him as one of our pupils."

"Oh, Monsieur le Supérieur!"

"But upon two conditions."

"I will accept them all."

"The first one, this — until the day when your position is established the child must spend his holidays, his vacations even, at our house, and not set foot in yours."

"But my Jack would die if he were deprived of seeing his mother."

"Oh, you may come and embrace him as often as you wish, but — and this is the second condition, you cannot see him in the reception-room, but here in my study, where I will take care that you shall not meet any one."

She rose trembling.

The thought that she would never be permitted to enter the reception-room, never mingle in the delightful confusion of those Thursday gatherings; her vanity intoxicated by the beauty of her child, the richness of her own attire, the sight of that brougham awaiting her at the door, that she would never be able to say to her friends, "I met Madame de C— or Madame de V— yesterday at the Fathers' — but must embrace her Jack only in secret, holding aloof from others, it was too revolting!

This thrust of the astute priest had struck home.

"You are cruel to me, Monsieur l'Abbé, you compel me to refuse now the favor for which I thanked you a moment ago. I have a mother's, a woman's dignity to maintain. Your conditions it is impossible to accept. What would my child think?"

She paused, for behind the window she caught sight of a fair little face animated by the keen air and feverish anxiety. It was watching her. At a motion from his mother the child entered.

"Oh, mamma, how kind you are! When they said you had not gone I would not believe them."

She seized his hand brusquely.

"You may come with me," she said. "We are not wanted here."

And she went out slowly, erect and proud in bearing, dragging with her the stupefied child, to whom this unexpected departure seemed like a flight.

She scarcely responded even with a nod to the courteous salutation of the kindly priest, who had also risen, but, in spite of the precipitation of her flight, she did not leave too quickly to prevent her Jack from hearing a gentle voice murmur with a compassionate accent that went to the heart:

"Poor child, poor child!"

Some one pitied him, then! And why?

Often he recalled the words in after days.

The Director had not been mistaken. Madame la Comtesse de Barancy was only a sham-countess.

Her name was not de Barancy, perhaps not even Ida, — who, then, was she? Was there one word of truth in those stories of nobility that filled her brain? Hard to say. These complicated lives suffer so many changes of fortune, so much is concealed of their long and eventful past, that one can be sure of nothing except the last phase of such an existence. They may be likened to those revolving beacons that have long lapses of darkness between the intermittent flashings of their fires.

One thing was certain, — she was not a Parisian, but had come from some provincial town whose accent still clung to her. She knew nothing of Paris, and was lacking in style, according to Mademoiselle Constant, her maid.

"Provincial *cocotte*," observed this person disdainfully. It is true that one evening at the Gymnase Theatre, two tradesmen of Lyons fancied they recognized in her a certain Mélanie Tavrot, who had formerly kept a glove and per-

fumery shop on the Place des Terreaux, but these gentlemen soon discovered their mistake and were profuse of apologies. On another occasion an officer of the Third Hussars imagined she was a certain Nana he had known eight years before at Orléansville, and he also made proper apologies for his error. Really resemblances are frequently most impertinent things.

However, Madame de Barancy had travelled far and wide, and did not conceal this fact from any one, but he would have been a sorcerer who could have extracted anything coherent or definite from the flood of words she poured forth on every possible occasion concerning her origin and her life.

Sometimes, her birthplace having been one of the colonies, she would talk of her mother, a bewitching creole, and of their plantations and negresses. But again, Touraine was her birthplace; her childhood days had been spent in a great château on a bank of the Loire. In all these details and anecdotes there was a marvellous contempt of any effort at a connected story of her life.

As has been already seen, the dominant emotion in these fantastic narratives was vanity, the vanity of a noisy green paroquet. Nobility, fortune, money, titles, these were the themes she harped upon constantly.

Rich she certainly was, or at least, she was supported in luxury. A little establishment, on the Boulevard Haussmann had been rented for her. She had horses, carriages, gorgeous furniture in

questionable taste, she had three or four servants and led the aimless, indolent life of her kind, though she had not quite lost a slightly shamefaced air, had at times a certain timidity, doubtless, a legacy of her life in the provinces, which understand better than Paris how to defend themselves against women of this stamp. This air, and a certain freshness about her, possibly a souvenir of a childhood spent in the open air, kept her apart from the great stream of Parisian life, in which, as yet, she had found no place, for she was merely a new arrival.

Every week a middle-aged man of distinguished appearance visited her, and, speaking of him, Ida said "*Monsieur!*" with such a majestic air that the listener might have believed himself at the French court in the days when the king's brother was referred to thus. The child's name for *Monsieur* was merely "*Bon ami;*" the domestics announced him loudly as "Monsieur le Comte," and among themselves referred to him more familiarly as "her old man."

Her old man must have been quite wealthy, for Madame herself stopped at nothing, and there was enormous wastefulness in the establishment, which was managed by Mademoiselle Constant, general factotum and the only really influential person in the house. She it was who gave her mistress the addresses of all the tradesmen, guiding her inexperience, ignorant of Parisian life and fine society, for the one dream and aspiration of this *déclassée* was that she might pass for a well-bred woman of

the world, distinguished, high-born, and irreproachable.

Consequently, it may be imagined into what a state Father O—'s reception had plunged her, and whether she departed enraged at heart.

An elegant, private brougham awaited her, at the entrance of the institution. She sprang into it with her child, and had only strength enough left to cry "Home!" in a firm voice, that was heard by a group of priests who had been talking upon the steps, and drew aside quickly to permit this whirlwind of furs and curly hair to pass on.

But after the carriage had started upon the homeward route, the unhappy creature, threw herself back in a corner; that coquettish air, assumed for the daily drive, was quite gone; she was dejected and in tears, stifling her sobs and exclamations in the padded silken cushions of her carriage.

What a humiliation! To think that they had refused her child admittance, that at a single glance the priest had discovered her real position, which she had thought so well concealed beneath all the false and superficial luxury of a worldly woman, an irreproachable mother!

Then what she was must be only too apparent. She could not shut out for a moment the keen glance of the rector; her wounded pride recalled it again and again, writhing as if upon the rack, at the mere recollection, the hot blood mounting suddenly to her face. She remembered how talkative she had been, the lies she had told, all to no purpose, and that smile, that incredulous smile in

spite of which she had continued, although it had fathomed her so completely at the first word she uttered.

Immobile and mute, Jack sat at the other end of the carriage, watching his mother sadly, without comprehending the cause of her despair unless it was on his account. In some vague way the dear little fellow felt himself to blame, yet, despite his sadness, he was overjoyed to think that he need not go to school.

Just imagine! for more than a fortnight he had heard of nothing but Vaugirard. His mother had made him promise not to cry, to be a good boy; *Bon ami* had prepared him for the event; Constant had purchased his outfit. It was all settled, and everything was in readiness. How he had trembled night and day at thought of the prison from which no one was willing to deliver him — and now at the last moment — a reprieve!

If only his mother had not seemed so sorrowful, how he would have thanked her, how happy he would have been to know that he was near her, wrapped in the furs of that little brougham in which they had taken such delightful drives! They would take them again! Jack remembered the afternoons in the Bois, those long delicious drives through the damp and muddy streets of Paris. It had all been so new to them, and his mother had been quite as curious as himself. Each monument they passed, the least incident in the street, everything delighted them.

"Look, Jack!"

"Look, mamma!"

They were like two children, and always looking out of the carriage window together, the child with his long fair curls, the mother closely veiled.

A despairing cry from Madame de Barancy suddenly broke in upon these pleasant memories.

"My God, my God! what have I ever done that I should be so wretched?" she exclaimed, wringing her hands.

Naturally this interrogation remained unanswered, for what she had done little Jack knew no more than she herself, and ignorant what to say, or how to comfort her, he took her hand timidly and pressed it against his lips with all the fervor of a lover.

She started, and gazed at him distractedly.

"Ah! cruel, cruel child, how much pain you have caused me since you came into the world!"

Jack grew pale.

"I — I have caused you — pain?"

He knew and loved but one being in the world — his mother. In his eyes she was beautiful, good, incomparable. And, though he knew not how, without intention, he had caused her pain!

At the thought a fit of despair seized the child also, but his despair was mute, as if the presence of the noisy grief he had just witnessed made him ashamed to betray his own sorrow. He revealed it only by trembling, by stifled sobs, a nervous spasm of grief.

The mother was frightened and took him in her arms.

"Come, come, that was only a joke! Why! what a big baby it is. Is he as sensitive as all that? Such a big, long-legged fellow, and petted and spoiled just like a baby! No, my little Jack, you have caused me no pain. I was mad to drag you into such stories. There, there! don't cry! Is mamma crying?"

And the strange creature, quite forgetting her late grief, laughed heartily to make her Jack laugh. One of the privileges of this capricious nature, all on the surface, was its inability to retain a single impression for any great length of time. And, oddly enough, the tears she had shed a few moments before only added to the brilliancy and youthfulness of her features, as a shower gliding off a dove's lustrous plumage makes it glisten without penetrating it.

"Where are we now?" she asked, suddenly lowering the glass moist with steam. "The Madeleine already! How quickly we have come! Suppose we stop somewhere. You remember that famous pastry-cook's? Come, dry your eyes, little goose, and you shall have some meringues."

They stopped at the Spanish pastry-cook's — a very famous resort at the time. It was crowded.

Gowns and furs rustled as women pressed forward, spurred on by the eagerness of their appetites; their faces, with veils lifted only to the eyes, were seen in the mirrors ornamented with gildings and cream-colored mouldings, which also reflected a glittering display of milk-white saucers, glasses, and all sorts of confections.

Madame de Barancy and her son attracted not a little attention. She was delighted. This trifling success, and her recent fit of weeping, caused her to devour numerous meringues and nougats, washing them down with a little Spanish wine. Jack followed her example, but more moderately; his big grief of a moment before made his child's heart swell, and he was full of suppressed sighs and unshed tears.

When they left the pastry-shop, the day, although cold, was so fine, the Madeleine flower-market filled the air with such a delightful fragrance of violets, that Ida decided to dismiss her carriage and return afoot. Starting with spirited gait, but slightly slackening her steps to the pace of a woman accustomed to seeing herself admired, she went on, holding Jack by the hand. The walk in the keen air, the sight of the shops which began to be lighted, put her in good humor again.

Suddenly, in front of a shop window more brilliant than any of the others, she remembered that in the evening she was going to a masquerade-ball, after a dinner at a restaurant.

"Dear me! I had forgotten all about it. See, my little Jack, how thoughtless I am — quick, quick!"

For she must purchase some flowers — a bouquet — and other small articles that had been forgotten. The child, whose life had always been made up of such trifles, influenced almost as much as herself by the subtle charm of elegant things, followed her about, capering with delight at the thought of

these festivities which were not for him, for he delighted in his mother's beauty, her dress, the admiration which her appearance excited.

"Charming! charming! You may send that to my home, Boulevard Haussmann."

Madame de Barancy threw down her card, and passed out, chattering exuberantly to Jack of her purchases.

Then she suddenly assumed a graver air.

"But be sure to remember what I told you. You must not tell *Bon ami* that I am going to this ball. It is a secret. Bless me! five o'clock already. How Constant will scold me!"

She was not mistaken. Her maid and general factotum in one, a tall, stout person about forty years of age, ugly and masculine in appearance, hastened to meet her mistress the moment she entered the house.

The costume had come. It was ridiculous to be so late. Madame would not be ready — impossible to dress in so short a time.

"Don't scold me, my good Constant. If you only knew what has happened. There, look!" And she pointed to the child.

The factotum was indignant.

"What! Master Jack! you back? It is very naughty of you, sir, after all you promised us. Then you must be taken to school by the gendarmes. Indeed, your mamma is too kind."

"No, no, it was not the child's fault. Those priests would not receive him. Do you understand? They insulted me — *me!*"

Then her tears flowed again, and she began once more to ask God what she had done that she should be so unhappy. Remembering the meringues, the Spanish wine, the sudden heat of the apartment, it will not seem strange that she fainted.

She was carried to her bed and bottles of ether and salts were uncorked to restore her. Mademoiselle Constant acquitted herself of all these duties after the manner of a woman accustomed to crises of this sort. She went to and fro in the chamber, opening and closing closet-doors, with the fine unconcern born of experience, her manner seeming to say, "This will soon pass over." And while performing her various duties, she was saying to herself:

"What an idea, to take that child to the Fathers! As if that were the place for one in his position! This never would have happened if I had been consulted about it. I would have found it easy enough to get him into a school, and a good one."

Jack was terrified at the state his mother was in. He approached her bed and watched her anxiously, asking her pardon in his heart for the grief of which he was the cause.

"Come, come, run off, Master Jack, your mother is better, I must dress her."

"What! Constant! You cannot think I am going to that ball. I have no heart for amusing myself."

"Nonsense! don't talk like that. In five minutes

more it will be another story. Look at this lovely costume of Folly, these pink silk stockings and your little cap and bells."

She had lifted the costume and spread it out setting the bells a-tinkling and Ida could not resist its glitter.

While his mother was dressing, Jack went alone into her boudoir.

The cozy coquettish little room, crowded with bric-à-brac was lighted only by a few dim rays from a street-lamp near by. Sadly, his forehead pressed against the window-pane, the child began to think about the emotions of this day, and by degrees, though he scarcely knew why, he felt that he was indeed the "poor child" of whom the priest had spoken with such compassion.

Strange to hear oneself pitied when he imagines himself so happy! It seems, then, that there are misfortunes so well concealed that he who is the cause of them, or merely their victim, does not even surmise them!

The door opened. His mother was ready.

"Come in, Master Jack, and see how beautiful it is!"

Oh, what a charming Folly, all in pink and silver and satin. What a pretty, rustling of spangles at every movement she made!

The child looked and looked, full of admiration, and the mother, powdered, volatile and light-hearted, her cap and bells in her hand beamed upon Jack, smiled at her own image in the glass, troubling herself no further to ask the

Almighty what she had done that she should be so unhappy.

Then Constant threw a warm opera-cloak over her shoulders and accompanied her mistress to the carriage, while Jack, leaning upon the balustrade, heard those two tiny pink slippers embroidered in silver, descend the staircase as lightly as if they already beat time to the dance, while they bore his mother away, far away from him, to balls which were not for children. When he could hear the tinkling of the bells no longer, he returned listlessly, and for the first time in his life felt disturbed at being deserted, though this occurred every night.

When Madame de Barancy dined out, Jack was intrusted to the care of Mademoiselle Constant.

"She will dine with you," said the mother.

In the dining-room, which seemed only too large upon such occasions, covers were laid for two, but it frequently happened, that Constant, who did not much relish these *tête-à-tête* with the boy, took their plates into the kitchen, and they dined in the basement in company with the servants.

A regular orgy it was. The greasy, stained table, loaded with food, was as disorderly as the hilarity of the guests. Of course the factotum presided, and did not hesitate to amuse her companions with the tale of her mistress's adventures using obscure phrases, however, in such a manner that the child need not be startled.

That evening the refusal received at Vaugirard was discussed at great length in the basement.

Augustin, the coachman, insisted that it was a lucky thing, they would have made a Jesuit, a hypocrite of the boy!

Mademoiselle Constant protested. To be sure, she had not made her religion, but she did not wish to hear others abuse it. Then the conversation turned upon something else, to Jack's great disappointment, for he had listened with open ears, hoping to learn why the priest, who seemed so kind, had refused to admit him.

For a time there was no further question of Jack or of his mother, but the religious convictions of each became the subject of discussion. The coachman, Augustin, when half drunk, entertained remarkable views of his own. His God, he affirmed, was the sun! He knew of no other.

"I am like the elephants, I adore the sun," he repeated with drunken persistency. At last some one asked him where he had ever seen that elephants adore the sun.

"I saw one once in a photograph," he answered with drunken majesty.

Upon which Mademoiselle Constant accused him of impiety and atheism, while the cook, a stout Picardy woman, full of peasant astuteness, repeated to both: "I tell you, it's wrong, — you must not discuss the faith!"

And Jack, what was he doing all this time?

Seated at the end of the table, overcome by the heat of the kitchen and the interminable discussions of these beasts, with his face resting upon his arm, his golden curls outspread upon his

velvet sleeves, he grew drowsy. In that confused, tired, uncomfortable state which precedes a nap taken in a chair, he heard, but indistinctly, the whisperings of the servants. It seemed to him that some one was talking about him, but the voices sounded far, far away, as if in a mist.

"Whose child is he, the darling?" asked the cook.

"I don't know," answered Constant, "but one thing is sure enough — he can't stay here, and she has asked me to hunt up a school for him."

Between two hiccups, the coachman stammered:

"Now wait a bit, wait a bit! I think I know of a famous school that is just the one for your bu-bu-business. It is called the College — no — not the college — the Gymnase Moronval; for all that, it is a College. When I was at the Saïd's, my Egyptians, I took the boy to that school every day, and the master, a kind of half-breed, used to give me prospectuses. I ought to have one about me still."

He hunted in his pocket-book, among some old dingy papers which he spread upon the table, and finally seized one dirtier than the rest.

"Look," he said, triumphantly and began to read, — to spell out, rather, with great difficulty:

"Moronval — Gym — Gymnase. In the — the — "

"Give me that — " said Mademoiselle Constant, and taking out of his hand she read in a single breath:

"*Gymnase Moronval*, 25 *Avenue Montaigne. —In*

the most beautiful quarter of Paris. — A family institution. — Spacious garden. Number of pupils limited. Course in French pronunciation according to the Moronval-Decostère method. Rectification of foreign and provincial accents a specialty. Correction of defective pronunciation of all sorts by teaching the proper position of the vocal organs."

Mademoiselle Constant paused to breathe, and then said to the others:

" Now this seems to me to be just the thing."

" I think so," said the Picarde, opening her eyes widely.

" *Proper position of the vocal organs. Lessons in reading aloud with expression, — principles of articulation and respiration.*"

The reading of the prospectus continued, but Jack heard no more.

He was fast asleep and dreaming.

Yes! while his future was being discussed around this vile kitchen-table, while his mother, a pink image of Folly, was amusing herself madly, no one knew where, he was dreaming of the priest he had seen that afternoon, dreaming of that gentle penetrating voice that had said:

" Poor child! "

II.

THE GYMNASE MORONVAL.

"25, Avenue Montaigne, *in the most beautiful quarter of Paris*," said the Moronval prospectus.

And indeed it cannot be denied that the Avenue Montaigne was situated in one of the most beautiful quarters of Paris, in the centre of the Champs Élysées, and that it had many delightful residences, bounded at one end by the quays bordering the Seine, and on the other by fountains surrounded by the flower-plots of the Rond-Point. But it had the unsymmetrical, composite appearance of a street laid out in haste, and still unfinished.

Side by side with stately dwellings, displaying their swelling fronts and plate-glass transparencies, light silken curtains, gilded statuettes, and rustic jardinières, were working men's lodgings, tumble-down rookeries which re-echoed with the sound of wheelwrights' and farriers' hammers. These were the remains of the old faubourg and were animated at night by the sound of violins from the Jardin Mabille, and all the noises of a prosperous tea-garden. At this time there could be seen in the Avenue, and I believe they exist to this day, two or three wretched passages, the venerable remains of the ancient Allée des Veuves, their sordid

aspect contrasting strangely enough with that magnificent environment.

One of these alley-ways opened upon number 25, Avenue Montaigne, and was known as the Passage des Douze Maisons.

Gilded letters upon the arched grating of the gateway announced pompously that the Institution Moronval was situated here, but once the entrance was passed, one set foot in the black, infected indestructible mud which recent building and pulling down had left everywhere, the mud of waste-lands. The gutter ran through the middle of the passage, the street-lamp intercepting it, and on each side were dingy lodging-houses, buildings finished with old planks, the whole aspect of the place carrying the spectator forty years back, to the other end of Paris, to La Chapelle or Ménil-montant.

This species of cottage with covered galleries, balconies, and exterior stairways connecting directly with the street, overflowed with washing hung out to dry, with rabbit-hutches, hordes of tattered urchins, lean cats, and tame magpies.

It was amazing that so small a corner could hive such a population, so many English grooms, domestics out of work, worn-out liveries, plaid caps, and tattered red waistcoats! Add to this, there returned every evening at sunset, the day ended, women who let out chairs, goat carriages, Punch and Judy showmen, vendors of wafers or of rare dogs, beggars of every sort, the tiny dwarfs of the Hippodrome, with their microscopic ponies

and advertising placards, and you can form some idea of this strange passage, placed like some gloomy, crowded side-wing of a theatre, behind the beautiful scenery of the Champs Élysées, echoing with the dull rumbling of carriages, surrounded by green trees and the peaceful luxuriousness of those lofty avenues, of which it was the reverse side, squalid and turbulent.

In the midst of this picturesque ensemble, the Gymnase Moronval was not out of place.

Several times a day there appeared a tall, lean mulatto with straight hair falling upon his shoulders, a broad-brimmed Quaker hat pushed back on his head and crowning it like a halo; he crossed the passage with a preoccupied air, followed by a half-dozen little rascals whose complexions varied from clear copper color to the intensest black, and whose shabby school-uniforms, thin bodies, and awkward, ungainly movements made them look like a corps of some colonial army in revolt.

It was the Director of the Gymnase Moronval, taking his daily walk with his "little tropicals,"[1] as he called them, and the comings and goings of this polychromatic school, the irregularity of its occupations, the startling appearance of its professors, added the final touch to the eccentric physiognomy of the *Passage des Douze Maisons.*

Certainly if Madame de Barancy had herself conducted her child to the Gymnase the sight of that *Cour des Miracles* which must be crossed to

[1] "Petits pays chauds."

reach the institution would have frightened her, and she never could have consented that her "little darling" should be left in that vile hole; but her visit to the Fathers had been so unfortunate, her reception so different from what she had expected, that the poor creature, really very timid at heart, and easily disconcerted, fearing some fresh humiliation, had left to Mademoiselle Constant, her maid, the task of placing Jack in the boarding-school which her servants had chosen for him.

It was a cold, snowy morning when Ida's carriage entered the Avenue Montaigne and paused before the gilded sign of the Gymnase Moronval.

The alley was deserted, the street-lamp hanging from its cord, creaked and swayed; the boards of the rickety buildings near by and the paper panes had the mouldy, dilapidated appearance that might have been the result of a recent inundation of the neighborhood, or the presence of an unfinished canal.

But the sturdy factotum advanced boldly, holding the child by one hand, her umbrella in the other.

At the twelfth house they stopped.

It was at the end of the alley-way, which at that point, as it entered the Rue Marbœuf, grew still narrower between two high walls. A few scattered and blackened branches shivered above a faded green door.

A certain attempt at neatness proclaimed the neighborhood of the aristocratic institution. Broken crockery, oyster-shells and old sardine-boxes, dented and empty, had been carefully swept

away from the green door, so massive and forbidding that it looked like the entrance to some prison or a convent.

The deep silence without, which seemed to make the gardens and buildings of the Gymnase still larger, was suddenly broken by Mademoiselle Constant's vigorous pull at the bell. When he heard that ring, Jack shivered at heart, and the sparrows, assembled upon a single tree, with that gregarious instinct that winter and scarcity of food awakens, were startled at the sound, flew away, and alighted upon a neighboring roof.

No one appeared to answer the bell, but whispering could be heard behind the heavy doors, and at the little open grating was seen a black face with thick lips, two eyes big with astonishment, and a speechless grin.

"The Gymnase Moronval?" asked Madame de Barancy's imposing factotum.

The woolly head vanished to make room for one of a different type, Manchoo or Tartar, with two slits that served as eyes, prominent cheekbones, and a long, pointed cranium. Then a coffee-colored half-breed appeared, inquisitive and smiling, but the door remained closed, and Mademoiselle was beginning to grow impatient, when a shrill voice called from a distance, "Why don't you open, you parcel of monkeys!"

Then that strange whispering grew louder and more emphatic. A key was heard turning in the rusty locks, accompanied by the sound of oaths and a terrible tussle, and when the door opened at

last, Jack saw only the backs of the schoolboys, who were flying in every direction, as frightened as the sparrows a moment before.

There remained at the entrance a tall lean mulatto, whose white cravat, wound several times about his skinny neck, made his face seem darker and dingier even than it was.

Monsieur Moronval besought Mademoiselle Constant to enter, offering her his arm, and the pair crossed a large garden, where the remains of paths and flower-beds looked still drearier beneath the sombre gray of winter that tinged everything.

Scattered about what remained of a lawn, were various buildings of eccentric shape. The Gymnase, it seemed, was at one time an establishment for photographing horses, but Monsieur Moronval had converted it into an educational institution. Among other things there was a great, sanded glass-covered rotunda, which served as a playroom for the children, and its glass panes, arranged like those of a hot-house, were broken in places, or cracked, and covered with innumerable strips of paper.

On one of the paths they met a little negro in a red waistcoat armed with a big broom and a coal-scuttle. He stood aside timidly and respectfully, to allow Monsieur Moronval to pass, while the latter observed hastily:

"A fire in the drawing-room!"

The negro looked as startled and bewildered as though he had been told that the drawing-room was on fire, instead of being ordered to light a fire at once.

The order, however, was not a needless one.

Nothing could have been colder than that big parlor, whose floor, faded and waxed, gave one the impression of a frozen and slippery lake. Even the furniture seemed as if seeking to shelter itself from that polar atmosphere, swathed in old ill-fitting covers, accommodating itself as best it might to them, like hospital-patients to their uniform dressing-gowns.

But Mademoiselle Constant saw neither the dilapidation of the walls nor the bareness of the big drawing-room, which resembled a partly glazed passage-way, the photographer of horses having left behind him in his transit from these incongruous quarters, an abundance of cold light which might have been dispensed with as well as not.

The lady's-maid was absorbed with delight at playing the lady, and giving herself airs of importance. She beamed upon the children, and remarked that they ought to be very well, there was such good air, and it was so like the country.

"Yes, so like the country," Moronval repeated, mincing his words.

In seating themselves there was that momentary disturbance often occasioned in some very poor dwelling by the advent of a stranger, the new arrival seeming to terrify a host of invisible atoms from their resting-place.

The small negro started a fire. Monsieur Moronval went in search of a stool for the noble stranger. At length Madame Moronval, *née* Decostère, who had been informed of the arrival, made her en-

trance, bowing pretentiously. This tiny, tiny woman, with a long, sallow face, all chin and forehead, must have been slightly deformed. She presented herself full face, and very erect, that not a hair's breadth of her stature might be lost, and as though there were some deformity of the shoulders that she wished to conceal. But she was extremely amiable, active, and dignified.

She called the child to her, stroked his long locks, and found his eyes very beautiful.

"His mother's eyes," added Moronval, impudently, looking at Mademoiselle Constant.

The latter seemed not too eager to disclaim the resemblance, but Jack exclaimed indignantly, with tears in his voice:

"That is not mamma — she 's my servant."

Whereupon Madame Moronval, *née* Decostère, slightly ashamed of the late familiarity, assumed an air of reserve that might have proved injurious to the interests of the institution. Fortunately, however, her husband redoubled his amiable efforts, understanding that a domestic intrusted with the duty of conveying the child of her employers to his first boarding-school, must possess some importance in that household.

And Mademoiselle soon proved that she did. She spoke in a high-pitched peremptory voice, did not conceal the fact that the choice of a school had been left entirely to her discretion, and every time she pronounced the name of her mistress, it was with a protecting, commiserating little air that plunged Jack into a state of despair.

They discussed terms, three thousand francs a year, not including his outfit. As soon as the sum had been mentioned, Moronval began his harangue.

Three thousand francs! It did seem a considerable sum. Yes, indeed! He was the first to admit that fact, but then, the Gymnase Moronval was quite different from other institutions. Not without reason it had been named, after the German fashion, Gymnase, a place for the free exercise of mind and body. And here, at the same time pupils were receiving instruction, they were also initiated into Parisian life.

They accompanied their master to the theatre, went with him in society. At great academic gatherings they witnessed literary contests. Instead of making of them monstrous little pedants, crammed with Greek and Latin, his aim was to develop in them all the human sentiments, to teach them the amenities of family life, of which the greater part of them, being foreigners, had been deprived for some time. But in spite of this, their instruction was not neglected; on the contrary, the most eminent men, savants and artists did not hesitate to join in this philanthropic work in the capacity of professors, professors of science, of history, of music, of literature, their lessons alternating every day with a course on French pronunciation, according to a new and infallible method, of which Madame Moronval-Decostère was the author. Moreover, there was every week a public exposition of expressive reading aloud, to which parents and guardians of the pupils were

invited, and enabled to convince themselves of the excellence of the Moronval System.

This long tirade from the director, who more than any one was in need of lessons in pronunciation from his wife, was delivered all the more rapidly because his Creole tongue clipped half the words, suppressing all the r's in his discourse, saying "*pofesseu de littéatu*" for "professor of literature" and "philanth'opic wo'k" for "philanthropic work."

But what mattered that? Mademoiselle Constant was literally dazzled.

The money question was really no concern of hers, you understand. The important part was that the child should receive an elegant and aristocratic education.

"Oh! as for that!" said Madame Moronval-Decostère, her long face upturned; and her husband added that he admitted to the Gymnase only foreigners of distinction, heirs of great families, nobles, and princes. He was, at that very moment, educating a child of royal blood, the son of the king of Dahomey. At this news, the enthusiasm of Mademoiselle Constant knew no bounds.

"A king's son! You hear that, Master Jack. You are to be brought up with a king's son!"

"Yes," continued gravely the head of the institution, "His Dahomeyan majesty has confided to my care the instruction of His Royal Highness, and without boasting I may say that I am making a remarkable man of him in every respect."

What ailed the young negro building the fire,

that he grew so excited, and shook his coal scuttle with such a clatter of iron?

The founder of the institution continued:

"I hope, and Madame de Moronval-Decostère, already presented, hopes as well as I, that when the young king has ascended the throne of his ancestors, he will remember the wise counsel, the good example set him by his teachers in Paris, the pleasant years he spent in their midst, their indefatigable care and assiduous efforts in his behalf."

Here Jack was greatly surprised to see the little negro, still busied with the fire, turn his woolly head towards himself, and shake it vigorously, rolling his big white eyes about in an energetic pantomime that expressed furious denial.

Did he wish to say by that gesture that His Royal Highness would not remember one word of the noble lessons received in the Gymnase Moronval, and that he would retain anything but grateful memories?

What could this slave know about these things? After the professor's last tirade, Mademoiselle Constant declared herself ready to pay, according to custom, a quarter in advance.

Moronval made a superb gesture, which seemed to say: "There is no need of that!"

Yet there was, and pressing need. All the house proclaimed the fact through its rickety furniture, crumbling walls and ragged carpets. The shiny flabby gown of the little lady with the long chin told the same story of dire necessity that Moron-

val's threadbare coat revealed in a fashion of its own.

But proof still more convincing of the fact was the eagerness with which husband and wife brought forth from another room a magnificent, clasped register that they might inscribe the name and age of the new-comer, with the date of his entrance into the Gymnase.

While these important points were settled, the negro remained squatted before the fire, where his presence seemed quite needless.

The chimney had at first refused to consume the smallest stick of wood, just as the stomach after long fasting, refuses all nourishment, but now it devoured eagerly, fanning with all the strength of its current, a beautiful red flame which snorted and leaped up capriciously.

The little negro, his head between his fists, his eyes fixed, gazed as if in ecstasy, his black figure appearing like some impish silhouette against that gleaming background.

His eyes were wide open, his parted lips smiled silently.

It seemed that with each breath he was drinking in light and warmth, chilled through and through, though enveloped in the radiance of the hearth, while without the white snow whirled beneath a dull and overhanging sky.

Jack was troubled. There was something cruel in Moronval's face, despite his bland air.

And the child felt lost in this queer school, farther than ever away from his mother, as if those

colored boys, come from every corner of the globe, had brought with them all the sadness of exiles, the unrest of those who are far distant from home.

At the same time he recalled the college at Vaugirard, secluded, but full of busy murmurs, the beautiful trees, the warm air of the greenhouses, and that atmosphere of friendliness and study and repose in which he seemed bathed when the Rector's hand had rested upon his head for a moment.

Oh! why had he not remained there? And this thought recurring, he told himself that perhaps here also they would refuse to receive him.

For a moment he was afraid they would.

Near the table, around the big register, the two Moronvals and Constant were whispering among themselves, glancing towards him. He caught bits of phrases, exchanges of nods and winks in his direction. The little woman with the long head looked at him sympathetically, and twice Jack heard her murmur, as the priest had done:

"Poor child!"

She too pitied him.

And why?

There was something terrible in this compassion. It oppressed him. He could have wept for shame, his childish soul attributing this pity mingled with disdain to some peculiarity of his dress, his bare legs perhaps, or his long curls.

But what terrified him more than all else was the thought of his mother's despair at a fresh refusal.

Suddenly he saw Mademoiselle Constant draw from her bag and spread out upon the old ink-stained table-cover a row of bills and gold coins.

Then it was decided, — they would not send him away.

The poor child was sincerely pleased at this, never suspecting for a moment that all hope of happiness for him was signed away at that table, and that the real misery of his life began.

At this moment a formidable bass voice resounded through the deserted garden.

"Nuns who repose 'neath this cold sod — "

The window-panes of the parlor still vibrated when a little, stout man, broad, short, and thick-set, with a black velvet cap, hair closely cut, and a forked beard, noisily opened the door.

"A fire in the drawing-room!" he cried with a comical air of amazement. "What luxury is this! *Beûh! beûh!* We have captured another 'little tropical!' *Beûh! beûh!*"

With a singer's mania, in order to test the presence of a certain bass C at the bottom of his subterranean register, a note of which he was very proud, although it occasioned him great uneasiness, the new-comer punctuated all his phrases with the aid of these *beûh's*, a species of dull and cavernous roar which, when it echoed through the place where he was passing, seemed to emerge from the very basement itself.

Sighting the stranger, the child, and the pile of money, he stopped short, dumfounded. Joy and

an amazement almost imbecile struggled with each other upon his face, whose muscles seemed accustomed to express widely-varying emotions.

Moronval turned gravely towards the lady's maid.

"Monsieur Labassindre, of the Imperial Academy of Music, our professor of singing."

Labassindre bowed twice, thrice, and then, in order to maintain a discreet countenance, he gave a kick to the little negro, who disappeared, his coal-scuttle in his hand, without a word.

Again the door opened, and two personages entered.

One was very ugly, grizzled, and beardless, with repulsive features. His eyes were ornamented with a pair of convex glasses, and his old overcoat, buttoned to the chin, bore upon its lapels plentiful traces of his near-sighted awkwardness.

This was Doctor Hirsch, professor of mathematics and natural sciences.

He exhaled a strong odor of alkali, and, owing to divers chemical manipulations, his fingers presented a multicolored appearance, yellow, green, blue, and red.

The last comer formed a striking contrast to this absurd-looking figure.

Quite a good-looking fellow, dressed with scrupulous care, adorned with light gloves, his hair tossed back affectedly as if to add to the height of an interminable forehead. His glance was absent-minded and disdainful, and his large blonde moustaches, heavily waxed, his wide pallid face, gave him the appearance of a sick musketeer.

Moronval presented him as "our great poet, Amaury d'Argenton, professor of literature."

He, too, at sight of the gold pieces, was as stupefied as Doctor Hirsch and the singer Labassindre. A gleam lighted his cold eye, but it closed again after a circular glance directed towards the child and his maid.

Then he approached the other professors seated before the fire, and having bowed, the three exchanged speechless glances of delight and amazement. Mademoiselle Constant thought that this d'Argenton's bearing was very grand; upon Jack he made an indefinable impression, stirring in him both repulsion and terror.

The child was to suffer at the hands of all those who were then present, but from this one more than from the others. It would almost seem that he had some presentiment of this, that he had divined "the Enemy" merely on seeing this man enter and that the hard glance which had met his own had chilled him to the very heart.

Oh, how often during his wretched life he was to encounter that faded blue eye, slumbering beneath the heavy lids, and opening suddenly with a steely glitter of impenetrable brilliancy. The eye has been called the window of the soul, but these eyes were so carefully closed, that it might almost be doubted whether there was really a soul behind them.

The conversation ended between Mademoiselle Constant and the Moronvals, the mulatto approached his new pupil, and giving him an amicable little pat on the cheek, said:

"Come, come, my young friend, you must try to look a little more cheerful than that."

And indeed at the moment of parting with the maid, Jack felt that his eyes were filling with tears. Not that he had any great affection for this woman, but she was a part of the house, she was in his mother's presence every day, and the separation seemed more final after the departure of that stout personage.

"Constant, Constant," he repeated in a low voice, clinging to her skirts, "you will tell mamma to come and see me."

"Yes, yes, she shall come, Master Jack, but you must not cry."

The child was tempted to do so, but he felt that all these people were scrutinizing him, that the professor of literature had fixed his glacial, ironic gaze upon him, and he strove to repress his despair.

The snow was falling heavily. Moronval offered to send for a cab, but the factotum announced, to the amazement of all, that Augustin and the brougham awaited her at the end of the passage.

"A brougham, the deuce!"

"And that reminds me," she said, "Augustin gave me a commission. Have n't you a pupil here named Saïd?"

"Yes, yes, certainly. A charming fellow," said Moronval.

"And a superb voice! You shall hear it," added Labassindre, leaning out to call Saïd in a voice of thunder.

A terrific howl answered him, followed by the appearance of the charming fellow.

A big, swarthy schoolboy entered. His tunic, like all tunics, made to last after it has become too small for the cramped overgrown body it covers, was too narrow and too short; fastened like a caftan, it gave him the appearance of an Egyptian dressed in European fashion.

To complete this striking picture — the youth's face was full and quite regular, but the yellow skin seemed to be stretched upon it so tightly that it was ready to burst; so parsimoniously it was distributed that he was obliged to close his eyes whenever he opened his mouth, and *vice versa.*

This unfortunate young man, with his scanty covering of skin, made one long to make an incision in him somewhere, a prick, anything to relieve him.

He did, however, remember Augustin, who had been in his parents' service, and had given him all his cigar-butts.

"What message shall I give him from you?" asked Mademoiselle Constant with her most amiable air.

"None," answered the artless Saïd.

"And your parents? Where are they now? Have you any news of them?"

"No."

"Did they return to Egypt, as they intended?"

"Don't know — never write me."

Certainly this sample of the Moronval-Decostère

education was not happy in its replies, and Jack's reflections were singular enough as he listened to the youth.

The indifferent manner in which the young man spoke of his parents, as well as what Monsieur Moronval had said a moment before concerning the family life of which most of his pupils had been deprived since infancy, and which he labored to restore to them, gave the child a sinister impression.

It seemed to him that his lot was to be cast among orphans, foundlings, and he himself, as much a waif as though he had come from Timbuctoo or Otahiti.

And he clung mechanically to the skirts of that terrible servant who had brought him there.

"Oh, tell her to come and see me, tell her to come and see me!"

And when the door had closed upon the furbelows of the factotum, he knew that all was over, that one part of his life, the life of a spoiled child, was a thing of the past, and that he could never live again those happy days.

As he leaned against the gate of the garden, weeping silently, a hand was stretched towards him, with something black in it.

It was big Saïd who sought to console him with some cigar-ends.

"Take some — don't mind — I've got a whole trunk full," said the interesting young man, closing his eyes that he might open his mouth to speak.

Jack smiled through his tears, declining those excellent cigar-butts with a shake of the head, and the pupil Saïd, whose eloquence was somewhat limited, remained standing in front of him, not knowing what to say next, when Moronval returned.

He had conducted Mademoiselle Constant to her carriage, and returned filled with respectful indulgence for the grief of his new boarder. Augustin the coachman had such fine furs, the horse attached to the brougham was so spirited, that the little Barancy profited by the splendid appearance of the turn-out. Most fortunate for him, for ordinarily to calm the nostalgia of his "little tropicals" Monsieur Moronval applied a cutting, switching, stinging method of his own very different from the Decostère.

"That is right," he said to the Egyptian, "try to amuse him. Play childish games with him. But go into the hall, for it is warmer there. I will give a holiday until to-morrow in honor of the new boy."

Poor new boy!

In the big glazed rotunda, where a dozen half-breeds were playing prisoners' base, and howling vigorously, he was suddenly surrounded and questioned in a jargon quite incomprehensible to him. With his golden curls, bare legs, and plaid, standing timid and motionless in the midst of all these lean, wildly gesticulating, lively little *pays chauds*, he looked like some elegant terrified little Parisian suddenly dropped into the big monkey-cage of the Jardin des Plantes.

This thought occurring to Moronval amused him greatly, but he was roused from his silent hilarity by the sound of a very animated discussion, in which Labassindre's cries of *beûh! beûh!* and the thin, solemn voice of Madame Moronval mingled in a terrific encounter. At once he suspected the cause, and hastened to the assistance of his wife, who was heroically defending the receipts for the first quarter against the demands of the professors, to whom a considerable arrearage was due.

Evariste Moronval, advocate and littérateur, had come from Pointe-à-Pitre to Paris in 1848, as secretary to a deputy for Guadeloupe.

He was at that epoch a determined fellow of twenty-five, full of ambition and desires, and not lacking either in intelligence or education. Being without fortune, he had accepted this dependent position to defray the expenses of his journey and in order to reach that terrible Paris, whose far-reaching flame attracts even colonial moths.

Scarcely had he landed when he dropped his deputy, formed a few new acquaintances, and plunged at once into that form of politics that consists of speech-making and gesticulation, hoping to renew his transatlantic successes. But he had forgotten the Parisian's love of chaffing and that wretched creole accent of his which no effort could succeed in destroying.

The first time he appeared in public he enlisted in some case prosecuted by the press, and made a

violent attack upon all those *miséabes quoniqueux qui déshonoaient la littéatu*,[1] and the overwhelming burst of laughter with which his tirade was received warned poor "Evaïste Moronval" of the difficulty he would have in making a name for himself as advocate.

He devoted himself to writing, but he soon perceived that it was not as easy to attain celebrity in Paris as at Pointe-à-Pitre. Very proud, spoiled by his successes in his native town, violent moreover to excess, he passed successively from one newspaper to another, but never remained on any one.

Then began that wretched life of hardship which either breaks a man's spirit or leaves him hardened. He became one of the ten thousand poor, proud, famished wretches who rise every morning in Paris, dizzy with hunger and ambitious dreams, who devour in the street tiny mouthfuls of the penny-worth of bread concealed in their pockets, who blacken their coats with a dab of ink and whiten their shirt-collars with billiard chalk, warming themselves only at the hot-water pipes of churches and libraries.

He knew every humiliation, every misery, — no pot-house would give him credit, the key of his lodging refused to him, his candle too short for the night's work, his boots soaked with rain.

He became one of those professors of anything who tramp the streets of Paris vainly, write humanitarian articles for encyclopædias at a half-centime a line, a two-volume history of the middle ages, at

[1] Miserable chroniclers who dishonor literature.

twenty-five francs a volume, compendiums, text-books, and copies of plays for special houses. Teacher of English in various institutions, he was dismissed for having beaten his pupils, an old creole habit he had not outgrown. Then he attempted to obtain a clerkship at the Morgue, but failed through lack of patronage, and because of a certain political paper.

At last, after three years of this horrible existence, when he had devoured an incalculable number of black radishes, when he had lost his illusions and ruined his stomach, chance threw in his way an opportunity to give English lessons in a young ladies' seminary, taught by three sisters, the Misses Decostère.

The two oldest were in the forties, the third had reached thirty. Small, sentimental, full of affectation, the inventor of the method Decostère, like her sisters, saw herself threatened with celibacy for life, when Moronval proposed for her hand and was accepted.

Once married, they still lived for some time in the house, where both made themselves useful by teaching. But Moronval had retained from the days of his adversity the habits of a lounger, a frequenter of cafés, and a whole troop of Bohemian companions, who invaded the peaceful and honest boarding-school. Moreover, Moronval governed his pupils much as he would have conducted a colony in the sugar-fields, and the two maiden ladies of the Decostère household, who adored their younger sister, were, nevertheless, compelled

to part with the newly-married pair, giving them an indemnity of thirty thousand francs.

What should be done with this money? At first Moronval thought of founding a journal with it — a review. But the fear of losing his hoard quite outweighed the joy he might have felt at seeing himself in print.

Above all things he desired to discover some method of making a fortune, and, while in search of this, there occurred to him one day an idea that was surely an inspiration.

He knew that children from distant lands are often sent to be educated in Paris. They come from Japan, from Hindustan, from Guinea, confided to the care of sea-captains or to business men who act as their guardians.

These little people are for the most part well provided with money, and novices in spending it. Here, Moronval felt assured, was a mine that could be easily worked. Besides, the system of Madame Moronval-Decostère could be applied admirably to the correction of every sort of foreign accent and defective pronunciation. The mulatto had recourse to some colonial journals with which he had not severed all connection, and inserted a startling circular written in several languages, and reproduced in the Havre and Marseilles newspapers between the names of ships clearing their ports and extracts from the *Bureau-Veritas.*

The very first year, the nephew of the Iman of Zanzibar and two magnificent blacks from the coast of Guinea arrived at Batignolles and found

their way to Moronval's little apartment, henceforth too small for his enterprise. Then he started in quest of larger quarters, and in order to reconcile economy with the exigencies of his new position, he rented in that dreadful Passage des Douze Maisons, adorned by that beautiful gate fronting the Avenue Montaigne, the abandoned buildings belonging to the establishment of a photographer of horses who had recently failed, even the horses declining to enter so filthy a place.

Fault might have been found with the superabundance of window-panes in the new boarding-school, but this was to be only for a time, for the photographer had led Moronval to believe that there would soon be an appropriation for an imaginary thoroughfare through this quarter, cut already by so many unfinished avenues.

A boulevard would pass through the passage at some future date; the project was already under consideration. And it can be imagined what a disturbance the hope of this prospective indemnity caused the Moronvals when they first settled there. The dormitory was damp; in summer the temperature of the play-room equalled that of a hot-house. But this was no matter. The most important thing was to sign a long lease, to place a gilded sign upon the entrance — then to wait. And they waited.

How many Parisians in the last twenty years have ruined their faculties, fortunes, and lives in this fever of expectation! It attacked Moronval with all its violence. The education of his pupils,

their welfare, were henceforth farthest from his thought.

When repairs became urgent, he replied, "There must soon be a change," or "We have only a month or two more."

And fantastic schemes occurred to him, based upon the exorbitant sum he expected from the expropriation. His enterprise in behalf of the "little tropicals" should not be abandoned, but he would continue it upon a larger scale, making of it a magnificent work, civilizing and fruitful.

Meanwhile he waited, neglected his school, running uselessly from place to place, always asking on his return:

"Well? Has any one been here about the *expopiation?*"

No one had come. What were they waiting for?

At last he began to understand that he had been duped, and in that weak creole nature, excitable but indolent, discouragement degenerated quickly into slothfulness. There ceased to be the slightest oversight of the pupils. As long as they were in bed in good season, so that no fuel and lights might be wasted, nothing more was expected of them.

Hours were assigned for daily lessons, but everything was vague, indefinite, at the caprice of the director, and the children spent a large portion of the day running errands for his personal service.

At first the older pupils followed a regular course of study; but it was soon found necessary to curtail this expense, although entering it carefully upon the quarterly account.

Could not private professors replace university-routine advantageously? Moronval called to his assistance his old acquaintances of the café, a doctor without a diploma, a poet without a publisher, a singer without an engagement, men whom no class of society claimed, nonentities, failures, and all of them as furious as himself against that world which would have none of their talents.

Have you ever noticed how these men seek out each other in Paris, how they gravitate towards one another, gathering in groups, sustaining each other by their mutual lamentations and importunities, their barren, idle vanity? In reality filled with mutual contempt, they form an admiration society that feeds upon flattery, and recognizes no existence outside its own.

Imagine what must have been the lessons of such professors, — lessons for the most part unpaid, and generally made up of beery discussions amid a cloud of tobacco-smoke so dense that at last they could neither see nor hear. And yet they talked noisily enough, one snatching the words from the other's mouth, absurdly prodigal of the few ideas they possessed, airing them in a peculiar vocabulary of their own, in which art, science, and literature were dragged to and fro, perverted, mangled, and reduced to tatters like some precious fabric acted upon by a corrosive acid.

And the "little tropicals," what became of them in the midst of all this?

Madame Moronval, having retained the tradi-

tions of the Decostère boarding-school, was the only one who took her rôle seriously, but patching, cooking, and the care of this great dilapidated establishment absorbed a large portion of her time.

In order that the pupils should go out walking, it was necessary at least that their uniforms should be kept in order, for the boys were very proud of their tunics bedizened with lace up to the elbows. In the Gymnase Moronval, as in certain South American armies, none ranked lower than sergeant, and this was surely a slight compensation for the sadness of exile and their master's ill-treatment of them.

For this mulatto was not to be trifled with. During the first days of the term while his coffers were filling, he was still seen to smile, but the rest of the time he was only too glad to wreak vengeance upon those poor blacks for the negro blood that ran in his veins.

His violence completed what his indolence had begun. Before long some of the guardians, shipowners, and consuls, grew mistrustful of the perfected system of education at the Gymnase Moronval. Several of the children were withdrawn. Of fifteen "little tropicals," only eight remained.

"Number of pupils limited," said the prospectus — and this was the only bit of truth it contained.

Sadness and gloom settled above that great, bleak building. It was threatened with seizure when suddenly little Jack appeared on the scene, brought there by Constant.

To be sure, a quarter's dues paid in advance could scarcely be hailed as the advent of fortune, but Moronval was quick to comprehend all the profits that might be made from this new pupil and his eccentric mother, whom he understood already, although he was not even acquainted with her.

And so on that day there was a slight respite from the mulatto's rages and severity. There was a grand dinner in honor of the new pupil, at which all the professors assisted, and the "little tropicals" had a sip of wine, an event that had not happened before for a long time.

III.

GREATNESS AND DOWNFALL OF THE LITTLE KING MÂDOU-GHÉZÔ.

IF the Gymnase Moronval still exists, as I like to believe, I desire to call the attention of the health commission to the dormitory of that respectable factory as the craziest, unhealthiest, dampest hole in which children have ever been forced to sleep.

Imagine a long ground-floor building, windowless, lighted only from above by a glass in the roof, and scented with an indelible odor of collodion and ether, for in other days it had been used for the preparation of the photographer's materials.

This affair was situated at the rear end of one of those Parisian gardens surrounded by great gloomy walls overgrown with ivy, covering with mould everything over which it creeps.

The dormitory was at the rear of a stately hotel, close to a stable, filled all day long with the noise of horses' hoofs and the sound of a pump always spouting, which completed the water-soaked appearance of this rheumatic hole, its walls bordered half-way up by a sinister band of green like the water-line of a ship.

From one end of the year to the other, it was always damp, but with this difference, that, accord-

ing to the seasons, the humidity was very hot or very cold. In summer this box, deprived of air, overheated by the glass above, evaporated in the coolness of the night all the day's heat, perspiring through its cracked walls, filled with steam like a bath-house.

Outside, a swarm of insects that made their home in the old ivy, attracted by the light of the glass, found their way through the tiniest cracks, and fluttered or crawled to the ceiling, buzzing, pattering, then dropping heavily upon the beds, attracted by the whiteness of the sheets.

The winter, though damp, was not so unpleasant. The cold fell from the skies with starlike scintillations: it rose from the earth, through the thin floor and the cracks in the partitions, but the children, cowering under the blankets, their knees drawn up to their chins, were warm at the end of an hour or two.

Moronval's paternal eye was quick to see what use could be made of that worthless shed, separated from the rest of the place by a dirt-heap and covered with that dingy hue which so soon impregnates deserted buildings, exposed to frequent rains mingled with the smoke of Paris.

"This shall be the dormitory," the mulatto promptly observed.

"But is n't it a little damp?" mildly suggested Madame Moronval.

He answered with a sneer: "Our 'little tropicals' will be cool enough."

There was comfortably room for ten beds, but

he put in twenty, with a washstand at one end, a piece of old carpet at the door, and this was the dormitory, — *dôtoi* he called it.

And after all, why not? What is a dormitory, but a place to sleep in? And did not these children sleep there? Yes, in spite of heat and cold, and bad air, in spite of insects, the noise of the pump, and the furious stamping of the horses. They contracted rheumatism, ophthalmia, bronchitis, but they slept, their hands tightly closed, breathing peacefully, smiling, sighing, seized by that delicious drowsiness that follows exercise, play, and days free of care.

O blessed childhood!

But that first night Jack was unable to close his eyes. He had never before slept in a strange house, and the contrast was great between his little room lighted by a night-lamp, full of his favorite playthings, and this dark, odd-looking place in which he found himself.

As soon as the pupils were in bed, the black servant carried away the lamp, and then Jack became very wakeful.

By the dim light that came through the glass covered with snow, he looked at those iron beds standing foot to foot, the entire length of the hall, most of them flat, empty, their blankets rolled up at one end; seven or eight of them were occupied, rising and falling with the movements of the sleepers, and stirred at intervals by a sigh, a snore, or a hollow cough stifled under the sheets.

The new pupil had received the best place, pro-

tected somewhat from the draught of the door, and the noises of the stable. Nevertheless, he was not warm, and the cold, added to the newness of the life upon which he had just entered, prevented him from closing his eyes. Lulled by a protracted wakefulness filled with vague shapes, he recalled all the events of the day, some details standing out clearly, as often happens in a dream, where, in spite of many a gap here and there, one thought is bound to another by the shining threads of memory.

Moronval's white cravat, his tall grasshopper outline and elbows pressed close against his body, protruding behind his back like paws, those enormous convex spectacles of Doctor Hirsch, his stained and spotted overcoat, the child saw them still, and above all, ah, above all, the blue eye of the Enemy, haughty, ironic and glacial.

This last vision plunged him into such terror that involuntarily he invoked his mother's protection. What was she doing at this moment? All the clocks were striking eleven, the sound reaching his ear from a distance. Doubtless she was at some ball or at the theatre. Soon she would return, muffled in her furs and the lace of her hood.

On such occasions, no matter how late the hour, she opened the door of Jack's room, and approaching his bed, asked him: "Are you sleeping, Jack?" Even in his sleep he felt that she was near him, and he smiled, raised his face, and through his half-closed eyelids saw the splendor

of her apparel. And a radiant perfumed vision remained to him as if some fairy had descended to him in an orris-scented cloud.

But in spite of the sorrows this day had brought him, his vanity had been delighted not a little with his cap and lace, and the joy of concealing his long legs in a blue uniform trimmed with red. The costume was a trifle long, perhaps, but it could be altered for him. Madame Moronval herself had pinned the seams that were to be taken in. Then he had played with his queer comrades, made acquaintance with them, and they proved to be good fellows in spite of their ferocious ways. They snowballed each other in the keen, cold air of the garden, aud this was a novel and charming amusement for a child brought up in the oppressive atmosphere of a pretty woman's boudoir.

One thing only perplexed Jack. He would have liked to see His Royal Highness. Where was this little King of Dahomey, of whom Moronval had spoken so eloquently? Away for the holidays? In the infirmary? Ah, if he might only know him, talk with him, be his friend! He had learned the names of the eight "little tropicals," but not a prince was there among them all. At last he gained courage to ask big Said about it. "Is not his Royal Highness at school here?"

The young man whose skin was too tight looked at him in amazement, his eyes so wide-open that he had enough skin left to permit of his mouth being closed for a moment. He took advantage of

that opportunity, and Jack's question remained unanswered.

The child was still thinking about the matter, and listening to the music, for sounds of an organ came fitfully from the house, accompanied by the hollow bass of the man they called Labassindre. The whole mingled quite pleasantly with the creaking of the pump, which was still in motion, and the kicks from the horses next door which shook the wall.

At last everything was silent.

All were asleep in the dormitory as well as in the stable, and Moronval's guests had closed the grated door of the passage behind them and disappeared, their footsteps lost among the distant rumbling sounds of the avenue, when the door of the dormitory, thickly encased in snow, opened silently.

The little black servant entered, lantern in hand. He shook himself vigorously, presenting a comical appearance, covered with thick white snowflakes which made his skin look still blacker. He advanced to the space between the beds, his back bent, his body cramped and shivering.

Jack could not take his eyes from this ludicrous outline whose shadow on the wall, elongated, exaggerated and grotesque, threw into strong relief every defect of that monkey-like head, the protruding lips, the enormous ears, the bullet-shaped woolly cranium with its receding forehead.

The little negro hung his lantern at the end of the dormitory, lighting it up like between decks aboardship. Then he remained standing for a

moment, his big hands swollen with chilblains, his dingy face turned towards the warmth and light, with such a childlike, amiable confiding expression that Jack took a liking to him at once.

Still warming himself the negro stared at the skylight, muttering to himself again and again: "How it snow, how it snow!"

His manner of pronouncing the word "snow," the strange inflection of that soft voice speaking so timidly in a strange tongue, touched little Jack, who glanced towards him commiseratingly and curiously. The negro perceived this glance and whispered: "Oh, the new boy! Why you no sleep, *moucié?*"

"I can't," said Jack with a sigh.

"Good to sigh when one is sad," said the negro, adding sententiously: "poor world, never sigh, poor world would — choke — sure, sure!"

As he spoke he turned down the covering of the bed next to Jack's.

"Is that where you sleep?" asked the latter, much astonished that a servant should occupy the pupils' dormitory — "but are there no sheets?"

"Sheets no good for me — skin too black!"

The negro made this reply, laughing softly, and prepared to slip into bed, half-clothed that he might be less cold. Suddenly he paused, took from his breast a small box of carved ivory, and kissed it devoutly.

"Oh, what a funny medal!" exclaimed Jack.

"No medal — him my *gri-gri.*"

But Jack had no idea what a *gri-gri* was, and the

other explained that it was the name for an amulet, for something that brought good luck. His Aunt Kérika had given him this keepsake before he left home, his aunt who had brought him up and whom he hoped to rejoin some day.

"As I shall mamma," said the little Barancy.

A moment's silence, each of the children thinking of his Kérika.

Jack resumed, after a minute's pause, "Is your country beautiful? Is it far away? What is its name?"

"Dahomey," answered the negro.

Little Jack sprang up in bed.

"Oh, then, then of course you know him — maybe you came to France — with him?"

"Who?"

"His Royal Highness, you know, the little King of Dahomey."

"That 's me," said the negro, modestly.

The other looked at him in amazement. A King! This servant he had seen all day in his old red woollen rags, running about the house, coal-scuttle or broom in hand, whom he had seen waiting on table and rinsing the glasses!

But the negro was not jesting. His face had assumed an expression of deep sadness, and his fixed eyes seemed to be gazing far, very far away, into the past, or some distant land.

Was it the absence of the red waistcoat, or the magic of that word King? The negro sitting at the foot of his bed, bare-necked, his shirt half open, showing his dark chest and the amulet of

gleaming ivory, was suddenly, in Jack's eyes, invested with prestige and dignity.

"How can that be?" he asked timidly, summing up in that question all the amazement with which his day had filled him.

"It is so, it is so," said the negro.

Suddenly he sprang up to blow out the lantern.

"*Moucié* Moronval not like it when Mâdou leave light burning."

Then, drawing his cot-bed towards Jack's, he said: "You no sleep. Me never sleep when me talk Dahomey. Listen."

And in the darkness, the whites of his eyes glistening, the little negro began his mournful history.

He was called Mâdou, his father's name also, the famous warrior Rack-Mâdou-Ghézô, one of the mightiest sovereigns of the land of gold and ivory, to whom France and Holland and England sent presents across the sea.

His father had big cannons, thousands of soldiers armed with guns and arrows, troops of elephants trained for war, musicians, priests, dancing-girls, four regiments of Amazons, and two hundred wives just for himself alone. His palace was enormous in size, decorated with spear-heads, shell-embroideries, and human heads that were fastened to the front of the palace after a battle, or sacrifices. Mâdou had been reared in this palace, where the sun shone upon all sides, warming the flagstones and mattings. His Aunt Kérika, commander-in-chief of the Amazons, took care of him, and though

he was quite small, took him with her upon all her expeditions.

How beautiful she was, his Aunt Kérika, big and strong as a man, clad in a blue tunic, her bare arms and legs covered with glass beads, her bow upon her back, horses' tails floating and waving at her girdle, and in her woolly hair two little antelope-horns, joining each other in the shape of a crescent, as though these black warriors had kept the tradition of Diana the white huntress.

And what eyesight she had, how sure her hand in plucking out an ivory tusk or chopping off the head of an Ashantee at a single stroke! But if Kérika was terrible at times, she was always gentle to her little Mâdou, and gave him amber and coral necklaces, and silken loin-cloths embroidered in gold, and heaps of shells, which are money in that country. She had even given him a little rifle made of gilded bronze, which the Queen of England had sent her, but which she found too light for her own use; Mâdou took it when he accompanied her upon great hunting expeditions through the mighty forests, with their network of tropical creepers.

There the foliage was so thick, the leaves so large, that the sun could not penetrate those leafy arches, where every sound echoed as in a temple. But they were light all the same, and gigantic flowers, ripe fruits, and birds of every hue, trailing their plumage from the topmost branches down to the ground shone and sparkled like precious stones.

Humming sounds, rustling and whirring of wings, were heard in the thickets. Harmless serpents waved their flat heads armed with darts, black monkeys leaped from tree-top to tree-top at a single bound and great mysterious ponds that had never reflected the skies, looking like mirrors in the immense forest, seemed to extend underground their green depths traversed by trails of light.

When the story had reached this point, Jack could not restrain an exclamation:

"Oh, how beautiful it must have been!"

"Yes, very beautiful," answered the little negro, who perhaps exaggerated a trifle, seeing his country through those prismatic hues lent by absence and the spell of childish recollections, the golden enthusiasm of these children of the sun.

"Oh yes, very beautiful!"

And encouraged by his companion's attention, he continued his story.

At night the aspect of the forest was changed.

There were bivouacs in the jungles which drove away the savage beasts prowling in the neighborhood, and circling around the fires with frightful yells. The birds, too, were disturbed among the branches, and bats, silent and black as the night, attracted by the blaze of the fire, flew quickly across it, gathering in the morning upon some immense tree, where they clung together, looking like weird leaves, withered and dead. With this adventurous life in the open air, the little King grew strong, skilled in every sort of warlike exer-

cise, handling the sword and the hatchet at an age when most children are still clinging to their mother's petticoats.

The King Rack-Mâdou-Ghézô was very proud of his son, the heir to the throne. But alas! It seems not enough, even for a negro-prince, to know how to carry arms or aim a bullet straight at an elephant's eye. He must also be able to read the white men's books, understand their handwriting in order to carry on the gold trade with them, for, said the sage Rack-Mâdou to his son, "white man him always have paper in his pocket to laugh at nigger."

Doubtless, in all Dahomey, some European might have been found who was learned enough to instruct the young prince. English and French flags floated above the factories on the sea-coast, and from the mastheads of vessels anchored in port. But the King himself had been sent by his father to a city called Marseilles, far away at the other end of the world, and he desired that his son should receive the same education as his own.

With what despair did the little King part from Kérika, leaving his sword in its scabbard, his rifle hanging on the walls of the cabin, to set off with "*Moucié* Bonfils," a white man in the factory who every year left Dahomey to store away safely the gold-dust he had stolen from the poor blacks.

However, Mâdou was resigned. He wished to be King himself some day, to command his father's Amazons, possess his fields of corn and maize, his palaces filled with red earthen jars where palm-oil

was cooling, and his hoards of ivory, gold, red-lead, and coral. To obtain such riches, he must merit them, be able if necessary, to defend them, and Mâdou thought already that it was no easy thing to be King, that if one's joys are greater than other men's, so also are his cares.

His departure was the occasion of great public festivity, sacrifices to the fetiches and sea-divinities. All the temples were opened for this solemn affair, all the people who had nothing else to do, were busied in prayer, and at the last moment as the ship was ready to sail, the headsmen led to the shore fifteen Ashantee captives, whose heads, severed from their bodies, fell, red and dripping, into a great copper basin, resounding heavily.

"Mercy on us!" interrupted Jack, hiding beneath the bedclothes.

And indeed it is not reassuring to hear such stories as those related by one who had himself been the hero. It might strike terror to the bravest heart, and to calm himself Jack tried to remember as quickly as possible that he was in the Moronvals' boarding-school, in the heart of the Champs-Élysées, and not in that dreadful Dahomey.

Mâdou perceiving the emotion of his audience, dwelt no further upon the public rejoicings that preceded his departure, but hastened to tell the story of his stay in the school at Marseilles.

Oh! that big building with its gloomy walls, the dreary class-room full of mouldy benches, hacked with knives, revealing the favorite pastime of the

prisoners! And those professors, the sombre black of their gowns heightened by the solemnity of their huge sleeves, the caps they wore! Then the usher's voice, crying, "Silence!" All the heads were bent, and pens scratched, and those monotonous lessons were recited twenty-five times, as if every child in that stifled atmosphere must snatch in turn the same scrap of learning; and the great refectories, the dormitories, the barrack-like yard, lighted for a brief space by a few straggling rays of sunshine, dealt with such parsimony, here in the morning, there in the evening, so completely hidden in the corners, that to feel and breathe and enjoy it, one must stand close to the big black walls that absorbed it.

Such were Mâdou's recreations. Nothing amused, nothing interested him — except the drum which announced meal-times and change of lessons, the hour for rising and retiring. In spite of the ignoble uses to which it was put, this drum caused the small heart of the warrior-king to beat faster to the flourish of its sticks. Then, too, there were occasional holidays, but of these he was deprived and this is the reason:

As soon as *Moucié* Bonfils came for him, Mâdou dragged him off towards the port, where the keels of the vessels lying along the quay, their yards intersecting each other against the sky, attracted the eye from the end of the street. There only he was happy, drinking in the smell of tar and seaweed, surrounded by vessels unloading their freight, much of which came from his own country. He

was in ecstasy at sight of the streams of golden grain, the sacks and bales that sometimes bore a familiar mark.

Steamers getting up steam, and in spite of their immobility, announcing that they were about to move by breathless bursts of vapor, some mighty ship spreading sail, making her riggings taut, spoke to him enticingly of departure and deliverance.

For hours he would stand watching some sail scudding towards the setting sun, spread like a sea-gull's wing, or a light cloud of smoke, like the puff of a cigar, that seemed to follow the flaming path of the bright luminary disappearing with it below the horizon.

All through his lesson-time, Mâdou dreamed of these ships. They were the symbol of his return to the country of light; a bird had brought him, he thought, another would carry him home again.

And possessed by this one idea, forgetting that *Ba*, *Be*, *Bi*, *Bo*, *Bu*, through which his eyes saw only the blue of the sea, the sea never still, and the great open sky — one fine day he escaped from school, slipped into one of *Moucié* Bonfils's boats, hid in the bottom of the hold, but was discovered in time; he ran away again, and this time with such cunning that his presence on the ship was not discovered until it was in the Gulf of Lyon. Another child would have been permitted to remain aboard, but when Mâdou's name was learned, the captain, expectant of a reward, returned His Royal Highness to Marseilles.

Henceforth he was more miserable than ever, treated as a prisoner and kept under constant surveillance, but his persistence never flagged for a moment. In spite of every precaution, he escaped once more, and hid in all the boats that were leaving, but was discovered at last in some engine-room, coal-bunker, or under piles of fish-net. When they brought him back, he was not in the least rebellious, merely smiled a forlorn little smile which left one powerless to punish him.

At last the principal declined any further responsibility for so artful a pupil. Send the little prince back to Dahomey! *Moucié* Bonfils dared not, fearing to lose the good graces of Rack-Mâdou-Ghézô, with whose royal obstinacy he was not unfamiliar.

In the midst of these perplexities, there appeared in the *Sémaphore* the announcement of the Gymnase Moronval, and the little black was forthwith despatched to No. 25, Avenue Montaigne, in the most beautiful quarter of Paris, where he was — I beg you to believe — received with open arms.

It was a great piece of fortune for the Gymnase, a living advertisement — this little black heir of a distant kingdom. Consequently they exhibited him, promenaded him everywhere. Monsieur Moronval appeared with him at the theatres, the races, along the great boulevards, just as some tradesman sends abroad through the streets of Paris a cab hired at so much an hour, with a placard advertising his business.

He took the boy to receptions and to club-gather-

ings, entering with all the solemnity of Fénelon conducting the Duke of Bourgogne, and they were announced as "His Royal Highness, the Prince of Dahomey and Monsieur Moronval, his tutor."

For months, minor newspapers were full of anecdotes, of repartees attributed to Mâdou; one of the editors of the *Standard* was sent from London expressly to see him, and they had a serious conversation together over financial and administrative questions, and discussed the manner in which the young prince expected to govern his kingdom, and his views about parliamentary rule, compulsory education, etc. The English paper reproduced that curious dialogue at the time, with questions and answers. The answers were vague, rambling, and on the whole left much to be desired. It contained, however, one remarkable sally of Mâdou's; when requested to give his opinion on the liberty of the press, he replied: "Eat all up, good to eat; all words not good to say!" At one stroke all the expenses of the school were paid by this one pupil. *Moucié* Bonfils settled the bills without making a single observation. But Mâdou's education was somewhat neglected. It did not go further than the A B C's, and the Moronval-Decostère method found him obstinately rebellious, despite its charms; this, however, troubled no one, for the years of his school-course must be multiplied in inverse ratio to the young King's progress.

And so he retained his defective pronunciation, his half-infantile forms of speech, which in depriving the verb of its tense gave a certain impersonal

character to each phrase, and seemed like the first effort of a race scarcely emerged from the mute language of the brute. He was spoiled, petted, and admired; the other "little tropicals" were instructed to divert him and yield to him on every occasion, a somewhat difficult matter at first, for he was terribly black, and that is considered a badge of slavery in almost every exotic country.

And the professors, how indulgent they were, what amiable smiles they bestowed upon that little black pate which in spite of its intelligence, steadily refused to take fast hold of instruction and all its benefits, that woolly little cranium hiding not merely such glowing memories of his native land, but also the utmost contempt for the inanities his new teachers tried to inculcate. Every one in the Gymnase nursed some pet project of his own, depending upon the future realm, already as powerful and beset with admirers as though Mâdou were marching through Paris under feather-fans, a fringed canopy, and fields of lances belonging to his father's retinue.

"When Mâdou is King!" This was the refrain of all their conversations. As soon as Mâdou was crowned, they would all depart for Dahomey. Labassindre hoped to reform the barbarous music of that land, and already saw himself director of a conservatory, and Royal Capelmaster! Madame Moronval-Decostère hoped to apply her method on a grand scale in large class-rooms where she fancied she saw innumerable mats black with little pupils squatted upon them. Dr. Hirsch's

dream was still more remarkable, for he fancied he saw all that horde stretched upon countless rows of beds and he himself practising upon them all the dangerous experiments his fantastic quackery suggested, no police ever offering to restrain him.

The first days of his stay in Paris passed very pleasantly for the little King, because of the admiration that followed him everywhere, and indeed Paris is of all cities the one where a stranger can best endure the tedium of exile, perhaps because in its atmosphere there is something of the atmosphere of every country.

If only the sky too had smiled instead of incessantly dropping a fine drizzling cutting rain, or covering the earth with whirls of white down, that *neige* which reminded him of the contents of the cotton-pod, ripe and bursting, if the sun had given any real warmth, and cut through the dull haze that surrounded it continually, and finally if Kérika, with her quiver, her bronze gun, her bare arms loaded with bracelets, might have appeared from time to time in the Passage des Douze Maisons, Mâdou's happiness would have been complete.

But suddenly all was changed.

Moucié Bonfils visited the Gymnase Moronval one day, bringing bad news from Dahomey. The King Rack-Mâdou-Ghézô was dethroned, the prisoner of the Ashantees, who had taken possession of the country and founded a new dynasty. The royal troops, the Amazon regiments, had been conquered, dispersed, and massacred, and Kérika,

escaped miraculously, the only one who had, took refuge in the Bonfils factory and besought Mâdou to remain in France, and never to part with his *gri-gri.*

For it was written: If Mâdou did not lose his amulet he would yet reign.

The poor little King certainly needed this thought to cheer his drooping spirits. Moronval, who had not much faith in the *gri-gri*, presented his bill, and what a bill! — to *Moucié* Bonfils, who paid it on this occasion, but informed the master of the school that in the future, if he consented to keep Mâdou, he must not count upon immediate payment, but trust to the gratitude and good-will of the King, when the chances of war should restore his throne to him. It was necessary to choose between this uncertain fortune and absolute renunciation. Moronval replied with great solemnity, "I will take charge of the child."

It was no longer "His Royal Highness."

Respect gone, the former cares and attentions lavished upon the little negro vanished also. All had some grudge against him, a sense of personal disappointment, and general ill-humor. He was now on a level with the other pupils, just like them, even to the buttons of his uniform, and scolded, punished, corrected like them, sleeping in the dormitory and submitting to the same rule as they.

The child could not understand what it all meant, tried upon them in vain his childish blandishments, his little grimaces formerly so much admired, but now received with strange coldness.

It became still worse when several quarters had passed, and Moronval, receiving no more money, began to regard Mâdou merely as one more idle mouth to feed. From the rank of pupil he passed to an inferior one. As the servant had been dispensed with, for the sake of economy, Mâdou replaced him, but not without rebellion. The first time a broom was placed in his hands, and he was shown how to use it, he obstinately refused to handle it. But the arguments of Monsieur Moronval were irresistible, and after a severe beating the child became submissive.

And, in fact, he found sweeping preferable to learning to read.

So the little King swept and polished with singular ardor and constancy, as was quite evident after one glance at the shining appearance of the Moronval reception-room. But the mulatto's savage humor never softened towards him, for Moronval found it impossible to forgive the boy for the disappointments of which he was the involuntary cause.

In vain did Mâdou endeavor to keep everything shining, and give those dilapidated quarters a veneering of cleanliness; in vain did he gaze at his master with coaxing eyes, full of the shuddering humility of a dog that has been cowed; his customary reward was a taste of his master's stick.

"Never pleased! never pleased!" the little negro would say with a despairing expression. And the sky of Paris seemed blacker than ever, the

rain more incessant, the snow more abundant and cold.

Oh, Kérika! Aunt Kérika, so loving and so proud, where are you? Come and see what they have made of the little King, how vilely they treat him, how wretchedly he is fed, how they clothe him in rags, without pity for his shivering body. The only suit that is fit for him now is his livery, a red jacket, striped waistcoat, and gallooned cap. And now when he accompanies his master, he no longer walks at his side as an equal, but follows ten paces behind him, and this is not the worst.

From the ante-chamber he passes to the kitchen, and from the kitchen, as his honesty and artlessness have been remarked, he is sent with a large basket to market at Chaillot.

The last descendant of the mighty Tocodonou, founder of the Dahomeyan dynasty, has come to this! He must haggle over provisions for the Gymnase Moronval! Twice a week he is seen ascending that long street of Chaillot, keeping close to the walls, a thin, sickly, shivering figure, for he is cold now, always cold, and nothing can warm him, neither the violent exercise to which he is condemned, nor the beatings, nor the humiliation of having become a mere menial, nor even his hatred for the Father with the Stick, as he calls Moronval.

And yet that hatred is strong indeed.

Ah, if Mâdou should become King again some day! His heart trembles with rage at the thought, and dire indeed were the projects for vengeance which he imparted to Jack.

"When Mâdou go back to Dahomey, him write nice little letter to Father with Stick, make him come to Dahomey, chop off him head, in big copper basin, with him skin cover big war-drum, and go fight Ashantees. Zim! boum! boum!"

Flashing in the dark, but softened by the reflection from the snow, Jack saw two small tigerish eyes, and the negro tapped lightly with his hand on the edge of the bed, to imitate the sound of a drum. Little de Barancy was terrified, and the conversation ceased for some moments. Buried in the bed-clothes, his head full of all he had just heard, the "new boy" fancied he saw a sabre flashing, and held his breath.

Mâdou, who had become excited by his story, would gladly have continued it, but he thought his comrade had fallen asleep. At last Jack drew one of those long sighs that seems to proceed from that immensity of space the dreamer traverses in a single instant, out of the abyss of a nightmare.

"You not sleep, *moucié?*" asked Mâdou, softly; "we talk some more together."

"Yes, I would like to," said Jack, "but, please, do not speak any more about that dreadful drum, nor of the big red copper basin. It frightens me too much."

The negro gave a little laugh, then said good-naturedly:

"No, no, *moucié*, not talk of Mâdou any more, talk about you now. What is your name?"

"Jack with a *K*. Mamma insists upon that."

"She very rich, yo' mamma?"

"Rich? I should say so!" said Jack, not at all unwilling on his part to dazzle the little King. "We have a carriage, a lovely house on the boulevard, and horses and servants, and everything. And when mamma comes to see me, you shall see how beautiful she is. Every one in the street turns to look at her. She has lovely dresses and fine jewels. *Bon ami* is quite right when he says he refuses her nothing. When mamma wished to come to Paris, it was he who brought us here. Before that we lived at Tours. It is so lovely there. We lived on the Mall, and every day we went out walking in the Rue Royale, where there are delicious cakes, and ever so many officers in fine uniforms. Oh, I did have such a good time. From the first all the gentlemen spoiled me, hugged me. I had Papa Charles, Papa Léon — not real papas, you know, make-believe ones, for my own father died a long time ago, and I never knew him. When we were first in Paris I grew very tired of living where I could see no trees, no country, but mamma loves me so much, and spoils me so that it consoles me. I was dressed like the little English boys, for that is all the fashion, and my hair was curled every day before I went to ride in the Bois de Boulogne and around the lake. But *Bon ami* said that I would never learn anything, that I must be sent to school, and mamma took me first to the Fathers at Vaugirard —"

Jack paused.

He was about to confess that the Jesuits had declined to receive him, but the thought wounded

his vanity. In spite of the innocence, the ignorance belonging to his age, he felt that there was something humiliating for his mother and himself in that refusal. And then the narration which he had entered upon so heedlessly carried him back to the only serious idea he had ever pondered over in his life: Why did they not want him? What was the cause of his mother's tears and that compassionate "Poor child!" of the Superior?

"But, I say, *moucié*," said the negro, suddenly, "what is a cocotte?"

"A *cocotte?*" repeated Jack, somewhat astonished; "why, I don't know. A cocotte is a—hen."

"Because Father with the Stick told Madame Moronval yo' mamma a cocotte."

"What a funny idea! Mamma a cocotte! You did not hear right. Mamma a cocotte!"

At the thought that his mother was a hen, with feathers and wings and claws, Jack began to laugh so heartily that Mâdou followed his example without knowing why.

This mirth soon drove away the gloomy impression which the stories had made, and the two little abandoned ones, having confided their woes to each other, fell asleep, laughter lingering about their parted lips until it was chased away by the regular respiration of slumber, and became a thousand tiny notes in joyous confusion.

IV.

A LITERARY GATHERING AT THE GYMNASE MORONVAL.

CHILDREN are like men, the experience of others does not help them.

Jack had been terrified by the history of Mâdou-Ghézô, but memory softened the picture, until it seemed as colorless as some terrible storm or bloody battle viewed through a diorama.

The first months of his stay at the Gymnase were so happy, so much attention was paid him, so much affection shown, that he quite forgot how the star of Mâdou's misfortune had shone at first with equal brilliancy.

At meal-time, he occupied the seat of honor next to Moronval, drank wine, partook of dessert, while the other children, as soon as fruit and cakes appeared, rose abruptly from the table, as if shocked at the sight, and had to content themselves with a yellowish queer sort of beverage, compounded expressly for them by Doctor Hirsch, to which he gave the name of "eglantine."

This illustrious savant, whose finances, judging by his appearance, were in a most deplorable condition, was a constant guest at the Moronval *pension*. He enlivened the meals by scientific sallies

of every sort, accounts of surgical operations, descriptions of diseases of an exceptionally purulent nature, which he had met with in his wide reading, and narrated by him with an ardor that seemed like some infernal obsession. He kept his companions constantly informed as to the death-rate, and the prevailing disease of the hour, and if there occurred in some remote corner of the globe a case of black plague, leprosy, or elephantiasis, he had heard of it before the newspapers, and announced it with an air of portentous complacence, and many a shake of the head that seemed to say, "You 'll need to look out! if it should reach us now!"

He was very amiable, however, and as neighbor at table had only two habits that were annoying, first an awkwardness caused by his short-sightedness, and also a mania for dropping into your glass or your plate, upon every possible occasion, a drop or a pinch of something, powder or liquid, contained in a microscopic box, or in a tiny blue phial of most suspicious appearance. The contents frequently varied, for not a week passed that the doctor did not make some scientific discovery, but in general a bicarbonate, an alkali or arsenic (happily in infinitesimal doses), formed the base of this medicament added to the food. Jack endured all these attentions in the form of prophylactic doses, and dared not venture to say that the alkali had a vile taste. From time to time the other professors were invited. The health of the little Barancy was drunk by all, and it was

touching to see the enthusiasm which his gentle and graceful manners excited, to note how the singer Labassindre at the least sally of the new pupil, would throw himself back in his chair, and shake with laughter, wiping his eyes upon a corner of his napkin, and dealing the table emphatic thumps.

And d'Argenton, the beautiful d'Argenton, would deign to be amused. A faint smile quivered upon his moustaches, his cold, glassy blue eye turned towards the child with a lordly and distant air of approbation.

Jack was delighted.

He neither understood nor wished to understand the shruggings, the winks that Mâdou sent him, as he passed around the table, standing behind the guests, performing his humiliating and menial duties, a napkin over his arm, rubbing some plate in his hand.

Who so well as Mâdou understood the real value of that exaggerated flattery, and all the emptiness of human greatness!

He, too, had sat in the seat of honor, drunk his master's wine, seasoned with the contents of the doctor's tiny phial. And that tunic laced with silver, of which Jack seemed to be so proud, why was it too large for him? Because it had been made for Mâdou himself.

The warning of this illustrious fall ought to have put the little Barancy on his guard against pride, for his first experiences were exactly like the little King's.

A constant round of amusement, all the school participating for his pleasure, the same senseless flatteries, and nothing else, except from time to time a few lessons from Madame Moronval in application of the famous system. There was nothing especially laborious about these lessons, for the little dwarf was an excellent woman, whose only fault was a constant exaggeration in her pronunciation of the simplest words. She said: "*l'estomack*, the *ouagons*." "I went in a *ouagon*." No one had the slightest idea what she was talking about.

As for Moronval, he confessed to an over-fondness for the new pupil. The knave had made inquiries. He knew all about the house on the Boulevard Haussmann, and all the profits that might be derived from "*Bon ami*."

And so when Madame de Barancy came to see Jack, a frequent occurrence, she was welcomed obsequiously, and found an audience ever ready to listen to every idle, vain story she chose to retail. At her first appearance, Madame Moronval, *née* Decostère, had felt it incumbent upon her to maintain a certain dignity of bearing towards such a light creature, but the mulatto settled that matter once for all, and, with a cloud of fine distinctions, she contrived to retain the scruples of a virtuous woman, without sacrificing those dictated merely by business-interest.

"Jack! Jack! here is your mother!" a voice would cry. The gate opened, and Ida, elegantly dressed, advanced towards the parlor, her hands

and muff filled with small packages of cakes and bonbons. Everybody was feasted. They all lunched together. Jack made a general distribution among the "little tropicals," and Madame de Barancy herself ungloved one of her hands, the one most bedecked with rings, to take her share of these dainties.

The poor creature was so generous, money slipped so easily through her fingers, that she always brought with her cakes all sorts of gifts, fancy articles, and playthings, which she distributed right and left as the humor seized her. It may be imagined what vulgar flattery, what servile exclamations rewarded this thoughtless generosity. Moronval alone had a smile of pity and envy ill-restrained at seeing Fortune squandering her gifts upon mere trifles when she might have aided some generous, lofty, disinherited spirit like himself.

This was his constant thought, and while he admired Ida, and listened to her stories, he sometimes appeared preoccupied, absent-minded, bit his nails furiously, with the feverish anxiety of one whose petition is trembling on his lips, and who almost bears you a grudge for not having guessed it.

For a long time Moronval had dreamt of founding a Review devoted entirely to colonial interests, to satisfy thus his political ambition by reminding his compatriots of his existence at regular intervals, and to arrive at length, who knows? — at the dignity of a deputyship. At the start a journal

was indispensable, although it might perhaps be abandoned later on.

He often discussed this project with the Failures, who greeted it enthusiastically. Ah! if they had only an organ of their own! So much unpublished copy seething in their brains, so many unuttered, or, to be more exact, unutterable ideas, which would become perfectly clear, once they were seen in all the distinctness of type!

Moronval had a vague presentiment that the mother of the new boy might be willing to defray the expenses of this review; but he desired to move slowly, fearing to awaken the lady's suspicions. It was necessary to lay siege to her, to surround her, approach the matter very gradually, in order that her somewhat limited intellect might have time to take it in.

Unfortunately, Madame de Barancy, just because of her extreme volatility, did not lend herself readily to his combinations. Without the slightest malicious intent, she could artlessly enough divert the current of a conversation that did not amuse her, listening to the mulatto with a smile, her gaze amiable but distracted, and all the more brilliant because it was fixed upon nothing.

"If one could give her the idea that she can write," thought the mulatto; and very delicately he attempted to insinuate that between the niche of Madame de Sévigné and that of George Sand, there was still a noble one vacant. But hopeless the task of insinuating unspeakable things through mere allusions to a bird that is

busied incessantly beating the air with its fluttering wings!

"She is not clever, poor woman," he said after each of these conversations, into which the one threw himself with feverish impatience while the other babbled of trivial things, he gnawing his nails angrily, she talking on and on, not listening even to herself or to anything that was said around her. No arguments could penetrate such a lark's brain as that, she must be dazzled in some way, and Moronval's efforts were finally successful.

One day, when Ida was seated in state in the parlor, perched upon all those titles and *de's* which she bestowed indiscriminately upon her friends and acquaintances, thereby adding lustre to her own nobility, Madame Moronval-Decostère said to her with some timidity:

"Monsieur Moronval would like to ask something of you, but he does not dare."

"Oh, tell me, tell me!" said the poor, foolish creature, with such an eager desire to oblige that the director was half inclined to ask at once for funds for the publication of a Review, but being both cunning and suspicious, he preferred to be extremely cautious, advancing little by little, "feeling his way," as he said, with a blink of his tiger-cat eyes, and he contented himself with requesting the presence of Madame de Barancy on the following Sunday, at one of their public and literary gatherings.

Upon the programme these were called "Lectures on the art of expressive reading, followed by

the recitation of select passages from our best poets and prose-writers." Needless to add that among them d'Argenton and Moronval held first rank. In fact this was the method the Failures had discovered by which they could inflict themselves upon a kind of public, through the medium of the indefatigable and expressive Madame Moronval-Decostère. A few friends were invited, and the guardians of the pupils. At first these little entertainments were of weekly occurrence, but after the downfall of Mâdou, they were singularly far apart.

For it was quite in vain that Moronval extinguished a candle with each departing guest, which lent a perceptible gloom to the gathering before the end of the evening; in vain, all the ensuing week, he dried upon the windows the remains left in the tea-pot, gluey little black heaps, like sea-weed out of water, and served it again at future meetings; still the expenses were too great for the impoverished institution. They could not even count upon an advertisement in return, for at evening and at the hour the guests assembled, the Passage des Douze Maisons with its lantern gleaming like a solitary eye in the forehead of a monster, was scarcely calculated to attract passers-by. The most venturesome rarely went beyond the gate.

Now, however, it was necessary to lend a new splendor to these literary evenings.

Madame de Barancy accepted the invitation eagerly. The thought of being permitted to

appear in the drawing-room of a married woman, and especially at an artistic reunion, flattered her extremely; it meant that one rung of the social ladder was conquered in spite of her irregular existence!

Ah! it was a magnificent affair, that gathering, with its lecture on the art of expressive reading, "the first of the new series." Never before had the "little tropicals" witnessed such prodigality.

Two colored lanterns hung from the acacias at the entrance, the vestibule was ornamented with a night lamp, and more than thirty candles were burning in the drawing-room, which had been waxed and polished by Mâdou for the occasion to such a degree that although there were no mirrors, this startling illumination was reflected on the floor, which was as brilliant as glass, and had all its other slippery and dangerous qualities.

Mâdou had surpassed himself as a polisher. Just here I must mention that Moronval himself was perplexed as to the rôle that should be given the little negro for the evening.

Should he remain a servant or be restored for a single day to his rank and his defunct splendor? The latter thought was very tempting. But then, who would pass the trays, admit and announce the guests?

Mâdou with his ebony skin, was invaluable. And who could replace him? The other pupils had guardians in Paris who might consider this sort of education objectionable, and then!—he

decided that the reception would have to do without the presence and prestige of a Royal Highness.

At eight o'clock the "little tropicals" seated themselves upon the benches, the blond curls of little de Barancy gleaming like sunlight against that sombre background of swarthy faces.

Moronval had sent out numerous invitations in the literary and artistic world — that, at least, frequented by him — and from the most eccentric corners of Paris, Failures in art, literature, and architecture flocked to the Gymnase in numerous deputations.

They arrived in chilled, shivering groups, coming from the end of Montparnasse, or Les Ternes, upon the tops of omnibuses; they were all seedy but solemn, all obscure but men of genius, attracted from the gloom in which they struggled by a wish to be seen, to recite, or to sing something, that they might assure themselves they still existed. Then, after a breath of pure air a momentary glimpse of heaven, comforted by some slight semblance of glory and success, they were ready to return to the bitter limbo that held them in durance, having gained strength to vegetate a while longer.

For they were indeed a curious species, vegetating, embryonic and incomplete, similar to those products at the bottom of the sea, existences, it is true, but devoid of motion, and lacking only perfume to become flowers.

There were philosophers greater than Leibnitz,

but deaf and dumb from birth, able only to gesticulate their ideas, and mumble inarticulate arguments. Painters tortured with an ambition to do something great; but they placed a chair on its legs, a tree on its roots in such a singular fashion that all their pictures resembled views of an earthquake, or the interior of a steamer out in a storm. Musicians, inventors of intermediary claviers, savants of Doctor Hirsch's stamp, brains filled with all sorts of bric-à-brac, but in which it is impossible to find anything, because of the dust and disorder, and because all the furniture is broken, incomplete, and absolutely worthless.

Sorry and pitiable enough their appearance, and if their inane pretensions, as plentiful as the hairs of their head, if their pride, their eccentricities moved a smile, so much misery was stamped upon those shabby figures, that in spite of everything, one was touched with compassion at sight of the feverish gleam of the eyes intoxicated with illusions, the ravaged visages where defeated dreams and dead hopes had left their mark as they vanished.

Side by side with these were others who, finding art a mistress too barren, harsh, and exacting, tried to gain a living from the queerest occupations, quite at variance with their chosen professions, a lyric poet keeping an employment bureau for men-servants, a sculptor engaged as agent for a champagne-merchant, a violinist employed by a gas-company.

Others, less worthy, were supported by their

wives, whose labor kept them in genial idleness. These couples came together, and the poor companions of the Failures bore upon their brave but faded faces signs of what it had cost to maintain a man of genius. Proud to accompany their husbands, they smiled upon them, with a maternal air that said, "This is my work!" and they had real cause for pride, for these gentlemen, in general, seemed to be in flourishing condition.

To this procession must be added two or three antiquated literary men, drawing-room fabulists, fossils from some atheneum or prytaneum, members of philotechnic societies, and others, always on the watch for receptions of this sort, then the *figurants*, and the uncertain types, a gentleman who never said anything, but was considered quite an authority because he had read Proudhon, — another, introduced by Hirsch, and always referred to as "the nephew of Berzelius;" he did not, however, seem to have any other claim to distinction than his relationship to the illustrious Swedish savant, and indeed seemed to be an utter idiot; there was, too, a comedian *in partibus*, one Delobelle, who, they said, was going to have a theatre of his own.

Lastly, there were the frequenters of the house, the three professors, Labassindre, in gala array, humming his "beûh! beûh!" from time to time, to assure himself the note was still there, for he would have to use it during the evening, — and there was d'Argenton, the elegant d'Argenton with the curled hair of an archangel, perfumed

and in light gloves, his air at once genial and austere, and solemn as a pontiff's.

Standing at the entrance of the drawing-room, Moronval received all his guests, shaking hands absent-mindedly with each and very uneasy as it grew later and later, and the Countess (so they styled Ida de Barancy) had not yet arrived.

Anxiety seized the entire assemblage. They spoke in undertones in the corners where they had seated themselves. Little Madame Moronval went from group to group, whispering amiably, "We will not begin quite yet. We are waiting for the Countess!" and on her expressive lips the word Countess had an extraordinary inflection, solemn, mysterious, and aristocratic. The guests whispered to each other, each desirous of appearing well-informed: "They are waiting for the Countess!"

The wide-open harmonium, showing all its stops like an immense set of teeth; the pupils, arranged in a row against the wall, the little table adorned with a green cover, a shaded lamp and a glass of *eau sucrée*, and standing upon the platform, sinister and threatening as a guillotine at dawn,—Monsieur Moronval fidgeting in his white waistcoat, and Madame Moronval, *née* Decostère, red as a small turkey-cock in all the excitement of the reception, Mâdou-Ghézô shivering in the draught at the door, all, all were waiting for the Countess.

However, as she had not arrived, and it was very cold, d'Argenton consented to recite his poem, *Love's Credo*, which all the guests knew,

for they had heard it at least five or six times before.

Standing before the fireplace, his hair pushed back, head upturned as though his verses were addressed to the mouldings of the ceiling, the poet declaimed in a voice as emphatic and commonplace as was that which he called his poem, interlarding it with lengthy and frequent pauses, after each effect, to permit admiring exclamations to be heard, and to reach his own ears.

The Lord knows, the Failures are not sparing of this sort of encouragement.

"Marvellous!"

"Sublime."

"Superb."

"Hugo, but more modern!"

And this, most amazing of all:

"Goethe, but with a heart!"

Undisturbed, and, in fact, stimulated by all these praises, the poet continued, his arm outstretched with a magnificent gesture:

> "And though the idle crowd may rail at me,
> I do believe in love as I believe in God."

She entered.

The lyric poet, his eyes still in the air, did not even perceive her coming. But the unfortunate saw him, and from that moment she was undone.

On previous occasions she had seen him only in his hat and overcoat, clothed for the street, and not for Olympus. But yonder, in the pale light of those opalescent globes, which heightened the

pallor of his features, in his black dress-coat and light gloves, believing in love as he believed in God, he produced a fatal, a superhuman effect upon her.

He was the fulfilment of all those desires and dreams, that mawkish sentimentality at the root of such femininity as this, that craving for a pure atmosphere and an ideal which comes to them seemingly in revenge for the lives they lead, those vague aspirations that are summed up for them in a single word, whose nobility upon their lips is degraded to the vulgar level of all they utter — the word "artist."

Yes, from that first moment she belonged to him; he entered into complete possession of her heart as he stood there, with his finely parted hair, his curled moustaches, and quivering arm outstretched, with all the old tinware of his poetic shop. She no longer had any eyes for her little Jack, who was making despairing signs to her, and tossing kisses, nor for the Moronvals, bowing almost to the ground, she was oblivious of the curious glances eagerly directed upon the newcomer, her freshness and youth, the elegance of her velvet gown, her fluffy pink-and-white theatre-hat, with its tulle streamers enveloping her like a scarf.

She saw him, and him alone.

Long afterwards she recalled this profound impression, which no subsequent event could destroy, and remembered as in a dream, her great poet as he stood before her the first time in the drawing-

room of the Moronvals, which upon that evening appeared to her immense, magnificent, and as if gleaming with a thousand candles. Ah, he might torture her in every way, humiliate, wound, crush out her life, and that which was still more precious than life to her, but he would never be able to efface the glamour of that moment.

"You see, madame," said Moronval with his most insidious smile, "we were having a little prelude while awaiting your arrival. Monsieur le Vicomte Amaury d'Argenton was reciting his magnificent poem, *Love's Credo.*"

Vicomte! He was a Vicomte!

Her happiness was complete!

She turned towards him timidly, coloring like a young girl.

"Continue, monsieur, I entreat."

But d'Argenton declined to continue. The arrival of the Countess had interrupted the finest, surest effect of his poem, and such a thing is unpardonable! He bowed with cold and ironic politeness, saying:

"I have finished, madame."

Then he joined the other guests, and took no further notice of her.

The poor woman was heart-broken, filled with a vague sadness. The first word she had spoken had displeased him, and already the very thought was insufferable for her. It required all the charming wiles of her little Jack, delighted at seeing his mother, and proud of her latest success, it needed all Moronval's amiabilities and the attentions of

his guests, the feeling that she was indeed queen of the occasion, to efface her chagrin, which betrayed itself by a silence of five minutes, for a nature like hers an event as extraordinary as it was refreshing.

The stir occasioned by her arrival having subsided, all took their seats to listen to the expressive reading. The majestic Constant, who had accompanied her mistress, seated herself upon the bench in the rear, close to the pupils, Jack leaned upon his mother's arm-chair, the seat of honor, while Moronval sat at his side, and stroked his curls paternally.

The public formed an imposing assemblage, seated in rows as if for a distribution of prizes. At length Madame Moronval-Decostère seated herself at the little table, monopolizing the entire platform, lamplight and all, and began to read an ethnographical study of Monsieur Moronval's upon the Mongolian races.

It was long, tedious, and dreary, one of those lucubrations frequently read before scientific societies, late in the afternoon, between three and five o'clock to serve as a soporific for its members. But, unfortunately, the Moronval-Decostère method did not permit one to fall asleep or to doze even for a moment, as long as that tiny monotonous stream of words flowed on. One was compelled to listen, each word penetrated the brain like a screw, syllable by syllable, letter by letter, and the most difficult ones grated with terrible force as they entered.

What heightened the fatigue of the listeners

was the instructive and terrifying appearance of Madame Moronval-Decostère in the full exercise of her method. She opened her mouth in the shape of an O, twisted, lengthened and distorted it, convulsively, and upon the bench the mouths of eight children mimicked her exactly, following their professor in all her fantastic contortions, presenting what this excellent method called "the configuration of words." The silent movement of those eight little jaws produced a weird effect. Mademoiselle Constant was overwhelmed by it.

But the Countess saw nothing of all this. She was watching her poet, leaning against the drawing-room door, his arms folded upon his breast, his eyes gazing vacantly into space.

He was absorbed in meditation. How far away he looked, how preoccupied, and aloof from all. His head upturned, he seemed to be listening to strange voices.

From time to time his gaze would drop, descend to earth, but never deigned to rest anywhere. The unhappy woman watched him, expecting, imploring almost a single wandering glance, but always in vain. It fell indifferently upon all except herself. Apparently the arm-chair she occupied was vacant for him, and the poor creature was so unhappy, so disturbed by such indifference, that she forgot to congratulate Moronval upon the brilliant success of his study, which had just ended amid applause, and to the relief of all.

The expressive reading was followed by a little poetic gem of d'Argenton's, accompanied by

Labassindre upon the harmonium. This time, you may be certain, she listened, and all the hackneyed phrases, all the sentimentality of his verses, long-drawn-out and tremulous, modulated to the drone of the instrument, penetrated her very heart. She listened breathlessly, fascinated, drowned in that harmonic roar.

"How beautiful! how beautiful!" she said, turning towards Moronval, who was listening with a yellow and bilious smile, as though he would disgorge his spleen then and there.

"Introduce me to Monsieur d'Argenton," she said as soon the reading ended. "Ah! monsieur, that is superb. How fortunate you are in possessing such talent."

She so garrulous, such a chatterbox generally, spoke in a low, stammering voice, hesitating for words. The poet replied with a slight bow, still cold and indifferent to the admiration he had excited. She then asked where his poems were to be found.

"They are not to be found at all, madame," he answered with wounded solemnity.

Unwittingly she had touched his pride in its sorest, most sensitive spot, and he turned away, without a single glance at her.

But Moronval took advantage of this opportunity.

"*Mon Dieu*, it is too true," he said, "Literature has come to this! Such verse as that finds not even a publisher. Talent and genius are allowed to remain in obscurity, unappreciated, hidden under a bushel."

And suddenly he added: "Ah! if we had only a Review!"

"You must have one," she quickly responded.

"Yes, but the money!"

"Oh, that shall be found. It is impossible that such masterpieces should be lost to the world!" She was filled with indignation at the thought, and spoke quite eloquently, now the poet was no longer there.

"That business is settled," thought Moronval, and his perfidious craft penetrating the lady's weak point, he talked to her of d'Argenton, taking care to paint him in those romantic and sentimental colors which, he knew well, would charm her.

He made of the poet a modern Lara, a Manfred, a noble nature, proud and independent, whom none of fate's indignities had subdued. He earned his daily bread, declining all government aid.

"Ah, that is right," said Ida; then, still haunted by the eternal pedigrees of which her brain was so full and which she bestowed impartially upon every one, she asked:

"He is nobly born, is he not?"

"Most nobly, madame. Vicomte d'Argenton, a descendant of one of the most ancient families of Auvergne. His father ruined by a dishonest intendant."

And in her behalf he invented a hackneyed romance, with the accompaniment of an unhappy love affair with a great lady, the letters shown to the husband by a jealous marquise. She insisted upon all the details, and while the two whispered

together, bringing their arm-chairs nearer, the one of whom they were talking seemed to observe nothing of their manœuvres, and little Jack, much disturbed at seeing his mother thus absorbed, drew upon himself two or three impatient phrases, "Jack, do be quiet," "Jack, you are insufferable," — which at last sent him away to sulk in another corner of the room, his eyes filled with tears, his lip quivering.

During all this time the evening's entertainment continued.

A little Senegalee, brown as a date, standing in the middle of the platform, was now reciting a poem of Lamartine's: *Prayer of a Child on Awaking*, which he began in a shrill voice:

> "O pé qu'ado mo pè,
> Toi qu'o né no qu'à ginoux,
> Toi do lé no téibe et doux,
> Fait coube le fo de ma mé." [1]

Which merely proves that Nature smiles at all methods, even at that of Madame Moronval-Decostère.

Next the singer Labassindre, after numerous supplications, decided to "give his note" as he said. He made two or three tentative efforts, and

[1] "O Père qu'adore mon père,
Toi qu'on ne nomme qu'à genoux,
Toi dont le nom terrible et doux
Fait courber le front de ma mère."

["Father, my father's God Supreme,
Thou who hast heard man's supplication,
Thou at whose sacred, gracious name,
My mother bows in adoration."]

then let it out inconsiderately, uttering a roar so resonant and deep that the windows of the reception room and its pasteboard walls trembled, and away in the kitchen, where he was preparing tea, Mâdou-Ghézô, responded with a terrible war-whoop.

He loved noise, this Mâdou!

There were some comical incidents as well. In the midst of the profoundest silence, while a strange fabulist, who had set himself the task, as he ingenuously avowed, of rewriting La Fontaine's Fables, was reciting *Le Derviche et le Pot de Farine*, a paraphrase of *Pierrette et le Pot au Lait*, an altercation began at the further end of the room between the nephew of Berzelius and the man who had read Proudhon. There was a lively exchange of words, even of blows, and in the midst of the jostling, Mâdou had great difficulty in carrying the large tray loaded with cakes and syrups, passing back and forth before the greedy eyes of the "little tropicals," to whom he had been peremptorily forbidden to offer anything. Several times, however, during the evening they were refreshed with "eglantine."

Moronval and the Countess continued their conference, and the elegant d'Argenton, who at last had perceived the attention of which he was the object, stood opposite them, talking in a loud voice, in grandiloquent phrases, and magnificent gestures, that he might be seen and heard.

He seemed to be very angry — with whom?

With no one, and with the whole world.

He was one of that race of beings who are

embittered and have lost all their illusions, who have exhausted everything, though they have never been anywhere, who declaim against society, its laws, the tastes of the age, always, however, considering themselves quite outside the universal corruption of things.

At this moment he was taking to task the fabulist, a peaceful subordinate in some department or other, and said to him in a threatening voice full of scorn and hate, "Don't talk to me. I know you. The class you belong to is corrupt. You have all the vices of the last century and none of its graces."

The fabulist dared not raise his head. He was crushed, vanquished.

"What have you made of honor? What have you made of love? And your works, where are they? Charming works they are!"

Here the fabulist recovered sufficiently to reply:

"But permit me" —

The other, however, would permit nothing, and besides, of what possible interest were the fabulist's opinions to him? He talked over the head of the latter, his voice was louder and reached farther. He could have wished all France might have been there to listen, to hear him give her a piece of his mind. He had ceased to believe in France. The country was lost, plague-stricken, gone to the dogs. Nothing could come forth from it, neither faith nor ideas. As for himself, he had made up his mind to live no longer in such a land; he would expatriate himself in America.

As the poet spoke, he stood in a three-quarters' pose, and his attitude was irresistible. For though he could not see it, he vaguely felt an admiring glance bent upon him. He experienced the sensation of one standing in the fields at eventide, when the moon rising behind him, suddenly comes above the horizon, and magnetizes him with its light, compelling him to turn in the direction of that silent presence. Those feminine eyes fixed upon him actually enveloped him in a halo. He appeared beautiful almost, so strongly did he desire to be so.

Slowly silence fell upon the drawing-room, all listening to that solemn voice, which demanded attention. But Ida de Barancy was the most devoted listener. The bare mention of that voluntary exile in America, skilfully thrown into the conversation, made her sick at heart. In a moment the thirty candles of the Moronval drawing-room were blotted out, extinguished in the gloom of her thoughts. What filled her with still greater consternation was that, having resolved upon departure, the poet, before embarking, launched forth upon a furious attack against Frenchwomen in general, their frivolity, their corrupt lives, the banality of their smile, the venality of their loves.

He no longer spoke, he thundered, leaning against the chimney-piece, and sparing neither his voice nor his words.

The poor Countess, so completely absorbed in him, that she could not imagine him indifferent

to herself, fancied she understood whom he was addressing.

"He knows what I am," she said to herself, and bowed her head under the weight of his maledictions.

All around her there were murmurs of admiration:

"He is inspired this evening! He never was finer!"

"What genius!" said Moronval aloud; and in an aside: "What a humbug!"

But Ida's admiration needed no words to stimulate it. The effect had been produced. She loved.

For Doctor Hirsch, always in search of pathological eccentricities, this would have been a curious case of spontaneous combustion well worth his attention. But at that moment Doctor Hirsch was absorbed in quite another affair. He was trying to make matters better or worse between the nephew of Berzelius and the man who had read Proudhon. Labassindre was also mixed up in the affair, and there were whisperings, portentous, despairing gestures, movements to and fro, shoulder-shruggings, and conciliatory manœuvres of all sorts, specially calculated to bring about a fight between the two worthy fellows, who had not the least desire for one. But no one seemed to be disturbed about it, for affairs of this sort were of frequent occurrence at the literary gatherings of the Gymnase Moronval, and always came to an amicable conclusion just as they assumed the gravest importance. They were generally a sign that the little reunion, at which each Failure in turn

had stood before the marble chimney-piece or the harmonium long enough to reveal his genius, was drawing to a close.

An hour before, Madame Moronval had taken pity upon Jack and two or three of the smaller "*pays chauds*" and had sent them to bed. The others remained up, yawning with wide-open eyes, hypnotized by all they heard and saw.

The gathering began to break up. Paper lanterns, torn by the wind, still swayed to and fro at the garden door. The Passage looked gloomy enough, with its houses wrapped in slumber, not even a policeman upon his rounds to enliven the muddy pavement. But among those noisy groups who departed shivering, declaiming, and still disputing, none seemed to notice the gloom and coldness of the night nor the damp mist that was falling.

At the entrance of the avenue they discovered that the last omnibus had passed. All these poor wretches resigned themselves bravely. The golden scales of chimæra glittered in their eyes, brightening and shortening the way. Their illusions kept them warm, and, dispersing through deserted Paris, they returned courageously to the obscure miseries of life.

Ah! art is a great magician! It creates a sun, like the other, which shines for all, and those who draw nearer to it, however poor and ugly, deformed and even grotesque, they may be, carry away a little of its warmth and radiance.

The Promethean fire, rashly stolen, of which all

failures possess a spark that dazzles their eyeballs, may make them formidable at times, more often ridiculous, but it bestows upon their lives a grand serenity, a contempt of misfortune, a grace in suffering which other unfortunates do not know.

V.

SEQUEL OF THE LITERARY GATHERING AT THE GYMNASE MORONVAL.

THE next day the Moronvals received from Madame de Barancy an invitation for the following Thursday. At the end of the letter was a short postscript stating that the writer would be delighted to receive Monsieur d'Argenton as well.

"I shall not go," answered the poet very drily, when Moronval had communicated to him the contents of the perfumed, coquettish note.

The mulatto was vexed. This was hardly the way to treat a friend. And what should prevent his accepting the invitation?

"I do not dine with women of that sort."

"In the first place," Moronval retorted, "Madame de Barancy is not what you think, and besides, for a friend, one can afford to sacrifice a few scruples. You know that I have need of the Countess, that she is not unfavorably disposed towards my idea of a Colonial Review, and you do all you can to hinder my plan. You are not very accommodating, upon my word."

D'Argenton, after a great many entreaties, finally accepted the invitation.

The following Monday, having left the Gymnase under the care of Doctor Hirsch, the Moronvals

set off for the cozy establishment on the Boulevard Haussmann, where the poet was to join them. They were to dine at seven. D'Argenton did not arrive till a half hour later, and it may be imagined that in that interval Moronval hardly found it possible to speak of his great project. Ida was full of anxiety.

"Do you think he will come? Perhaps he is ill. He looks so delicate."

At last he arrived, curled and fatally beautiful; he excused himself carelessly with the plea of his numerous occupations; his air was reserved, but less arrogant than usual.

The house had made an impression upon him. The quarter was quite new then. The profuse display of flowers and carpets, which began on the stairway, decorated with evergreen plants, and ended only at the boudoir, scented with white lilac — that little boudoir with its blue ceiling bordered with gilded woodwork, and not unlike a dentist's reception-room — the dark furniture richly upholstered in gold, and the balcony, where the dust of the boulevard whirled about mingled with the plaster of neighboring buildings, all these things could not but charm the frequenter of the Gymnase Moronval, and give him an impression of luxurious and high life.

The aspect of the dinner-table, the imposing appearance of Augustin, worshipper of the sun, all those small details of service which add a sparkle even to indifferent wine, and a flavor to the most ordinary dishes, made the attraction com-

plete. Without betraying surprise, or yielding to his admiration as much as Moronval, who uttered frequent exclamations, and fed the vanity of the Countess with impudent flatteries, D'Argenton, the incorruptible, softened by degrees, deigning even to talk and to smile.

He was an interminable talker when the topic of conversation was himself and provided he was not interrupted in a sentence once begun, for his capricious imagination was very easily distracted. The result was a sententious, authoritative tone in every argument, however trivial, and a certain monotony of speech, springing from that eternal "I,—me," with which all his phrases began or ended. Above all things, he insisted upon dominating his audience and being heard.

Unfortunately the art of listening was one quite beyond the powers of the Countess, and consequently there were several vexatious incidents during the dinner. Argenton loved above all things to repeat the witticisms in which he had indulged in various circles, addresses to well-known personages, newspaper men, publishers, theatrical managers who had declined to accept his plays, print his prose or his verse. They were indeed terrible thrusts, that burned and cut, full of barbed poison.

But with Madame de Barancy he never was able to finish one of these famous *mots*, preceded for the most part by a long preliminary explanation. Just as he reached the pathetic part of the story, and his solemn voice began:

"Then I said to him these cutting words — "

Just at that moment the unfortunate Ida dashed into the very middle of his phrase, her thoughts entirely occupied with him, it is true, but in a manner most disastrous to the discourse.

"Oh, Monsieur d'Argenton, I entreat, a little more of this ice."

"No, thank you, madame."

Slightly frowning, the poet repeated, still more authoritatively:

"Then I said to him — "

"Don't you like it?" the other inquired naïvely.

"Excellent, madame — these cruel words — "

But the cruel words so long delayed, produced no effect, especially as they were generally confined to such remarks as these, "a word to the wise is enough!" or "Sir, we shall meet again!" whereupon d'Argenton never failed to add: "And he was very angry."

At sight of the severe glance the much-interrupted poet bestowed on her, Ida thought despairingly, "What ails him? Have I displeased him again?"

Two or three times during the dinner she was seized with a longing to cry, which she concealed as best she could, saying with an amiable air to Madame Moronval, "Do eat something. You are not eating at all!" and to Monsieur Moronval, "You are drinking nothing," which was a dreadful fib, for the inventor of the Decostère method was working her jaw more vigorously than upon the evening of an expressive reading, and her voracious

appetite was only equalled by the unquenchable thirst of Moronval.

The dinner ended, and they passed into the well-warmed, well-lighted drawing-room, where coffee was served, lending a perfume of intimacy to the occasion. The mulatto, who had been watching his victim for the last two hours, and felt the propitious moment had arrived, suddenly said to the Countess with an assumption of carelessness:

"I have been thinking of that affair of ours. It will not cost as much as I had supposed."

"Ah," she replied absently.

"*Mon Dieu*, no. And if our fair directress will accord me a few moments for serious conversation —"

"Directress" was an audacious master-stroke of policy, an inspiration of genius, but quite lost, for the *diétice*, as Moronval called her, had not heard him. Her glance followed her poet, who paced from one end of the drawing-room to the other, silent and preoccupied.

"Of what is he dreaming?" she wondered.

He was digesting. Suffering slightly from stomach trouble, and always worried about the state of his health, he never failed, after rising from table, to walk as rapidly as possible for a quarter of an hour, no matter where he happened to be. Elsewhere it might have seemed ridiculous, but here it was an additional touch of the sublime, and instead of listening to Moronval, Ida watched that bent forehead crossed by an austere frown, disappearing in the darkness at the further end

of the room, then returning towards the lamp-light.

For the first time in her life she loved truly, passionately, and felt her heart beat with those full throbs that none other are like. Hitherto chance or some vain whim had ruled her life, those liaisons of longer or shorter duration which had mastered her, only to be made and unmade, while her will remained purely passive.

Very foolish and ignorant, of a romantic and credulous nature, dangerously near that fatal age of thirty, which is always with women the date of some transformation, she now called to her aid all the romances she had ever read, that she might create an ideal which should resemble d'Argenton. Her features underwent so complete a change while she watched him, her bright eyes grew so tender, her smile so languishing that her passion could no longer remain a mystery to any one.

Moronval, seeing her thus timid and absorbed, gave a shrug of the shoulders intended for his wife, a gesture that said:

"She is mad."

And she certainly was. Ever since the dinner had ended, she had tortured herself trying to discover some means of entering her poet's good graces. At last she discovered it, and as the poet in his caged-panther-stride came near her, she said:

"If Monsieur d'Argenton were very kind, he would repeat for us that beautiful poem which met with so much success at the Gymnase the other evening. I could think of nothing else all the

week. There was one special verse that haunted me — '*I, I*' — how did it go? Ah, yes:

"'I do believe in love as I believe in the good God.'"

"*In God,*" corrected the poet, with a horrible grimace, as though his finger had been caught in a door.

The Countess, though she knew very little about prosody, understood at least that she had again displeased him. In fact he had begun to produce upon her a stupefying impression, against which she was powerless, which made her love for him resemble that humble, terrified, submissive worship that the Japanese bestow upon their savage jade-eyed idols. She appeared before him still more of a fool than she was and lost even that volatile bird-like charm, that variability of thought and expression which gave to her shallow mind its attraction for others.

But the idol was becoming human, and to show Madame de Barancy that he cherished no resentment against her for having ruined his verses, he suspended his hygienic exercise for a moment.

"I would like nothing better than to recite something — but what? I really know nothing."

He turned towards Moronval, with that impulse dear to all poets, who rarely ask for advice unless firmly resolved not to follow it.

"What shall I repeat?"

"Well," replied the other, sullenly, "since you were asked for the *Credo*, recite the *Credo.*"

"Really? You wish that?"

"Oh yes, monsieur," said the Countess, "you will give me so much pleasure."

"Very well," said d'Argenton, quite naturally; standing erect, his eyes upraised, he waited a moment, then began:

"To one who wronged me!"

Noting Ida's surprise, he repeated still more solemnly:

"To one who wronged me!"

The Countess and Moronval exchanged significant glances. This doubtless was addressed to the great lady already mentioned. The selection began quite mildly, in the tone of a worldly epistle:

"Your gown is exquisite, madame."

Then the idea of the poem became gloomier, passing from irony into bitterness, from bitterness to fury, and ended with these terrible lines:

"Lord, deliver me from this horrible woman,
Who drinks my very heart's blood."

As if this singular poem had awakened painful memories within him, d'Argenton relapsed into silence for the rest of the evening. Poor Ida became pensive as well. She was thinking of those great ladies who had so wronged her poet; she saw him pedestalled above them all, in some aristocratic salon of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where those female vampires were drinking his very heart's-blood, without leaving a single drop for her.

"You know, my dear boy," said Moronval, as they passed arm-in-arm along the deserted boule-

vards, while little Madame Moronval followed at their heels with some difficulty, "you know if I get my Review, you are to be editor-in-chief."

To save the ship, he was compelled to throw half the cargo overboard, for he saw clearly that if d'Argenton had nothing to do with the enterprise, he would obtain nothing more from the Countess than idle words, light as air, and empty promises.

The poet made no reply. He was thinking of anything but the Review!

This woman had disturbed his peace of mind. One cannot practise his profession of lyric poet and martyr of love, without being touched by those mute adorations which flatter at the same moment both the self-love of the man of letters and that of the professional gallant. Especially since he had seen Ida in her elegant and luxurious surroundings, somewhat vulgar like herself, but full of sensuous comfort, an amorous languor had taken possession of him, somewhat disturbing the rigidity of his principles.

Amaury d'Argenton belonged to one of those ancient provincial families, whose castles resemble big farms, without their rich and prosperous appearance. Ruined for three generations, the d'Argentons, having known every sort of privation beneath those venerable walls, having led the rural life common to sporting and farming squires, had been compelled to sell their only property, leave the country and seek their fortunes in Paris.

Since that time they had experienced so many reverses and commercial misadventures, that for more than thirty years they had dropped the apostrophe from the name. But in entering upon a literary career, Amaury had restored the particle, and with it resumed the title of vicomte, which was his by right. He hoped to make it illustrious, and with the fervid ambition of a tyro he remarked impudently: "I mean that some day the world shall speak of the Vicomte d'Argenton as it speaks now of the Vicomte de Chateaubriand."

"And of the Vicomte d'Arlincourt," replied Labassindre, who in his capacity as a former working man now become a singer, cordially detested the Countess.

The poet's childhood had been poor and unhappy, deprived of gaiety and sunshine. Surrounded by anxious and tearful faces, and those pecuniary cares that exert such a blighting influence upon children, he had never played nor smiled. A Louis-le-Grand scholarship had enabled him to go on with his studies, which he pursued courageously to the end, continuing his precarious and dependent position. His only distraction was to pass his vacations and an occasional holiday with his mother's sister, an excellent woman who kept a lodging-house in the Marais, and from time to time gave him enough to pay for his gloves, for very early in life he thought of his appearance above all things.

Such an unhappy childhood leads to a bitter manhood. After-life must bring much happiness,

great prosperity, to efface the impressions of those early years, and we sometimes see rich, happy, and powerful men, occupying high places, who never seem really able to enjoy their good fortune because their lips have never lost the envious twist that former disappointments left, nor their bearing the shamefaced timidity which is lent to inexperienced young persons by the ridiculous old patched coat cut from the paternal garments.

D'Argenton had cause to smile bitterly.

At twenty-seven years of age he had got no farther than the publication, at his own expense, of a volume of humanitarian poems, which had compelled him to live on bread and water for six months, while no one ever mentioned the poems. He was very active, nevertheless, had the will to work, and faith, but these forces avail little to make a poet. The muse must have wings; d'Argenton's had none. In their place he felt merely that vague sense of uneasiness imparted by the lack of a missing member, nothing more. And his fruitless, useless efforts were merely time and labor lost.

The few lessons he gave just permitted him to exist, and wait for the end of the month, when his aunt who had retired from Paris, sent him a small allowance. His life resembled but little that ideal of Ida's, the dissipated life of a worldly poet passing from salon to salon of the noble faubourg, his footing established by successful intrigues.

Of a cold and arrogant nature, the poet had thus far avoided every serious entanglement. Yet opportunities had not been lacking. No one doubts

the existence of a sort of woman, ever ready to adore creatures of his sort and to nibble at that enticing bait, "I believe in love!" But d'Argenton had never regarded women as other than obstacles, and intercourse with them a waste of time. Their admiration sufficed him, and he deliberately placed himself above them, dwelling in a loftier sphere, surrounded by an adoration to which he did not condescend to respond.

Ida de Barancy was perhaps the first woman who had made a genuine impression upon him. She did not, however, suspect the fact, and every time she went to the Gymnase, attracted far oftener than was necessary to see her little Jack, when she found herself face to face with d'Argenton, she had always the same humble attitude, the same timid voice that seemed to implore pardon for some fault.

On his side, the poet even after his visit to the Boulevard Haussmann, continued to play his comedy of indifference, but this did not hinder his making much of the child in secret, calling him to his side, and leading him to talk of his mother and of the home whose elegance had tempted yet disgusted him at the same moment, through some strange mixture of vanity and amorous jealousy.

How often during the literature lesson — what literature could interest those forlorn "little tropicals?" — how often he would call Jack to the table at which he sat, and question him! Where did his mother go? What did she do? What had she been saying?

Jack, highly flattered, gave all the desired information, and even more, for he inevitably introduced the thought of *Bon ami* into these private conversations, a thought which already haunted d'Argenton, though he strove to put it far from him; this curly-haired baby, with his soft little voice, would inform him pitilessly, *Bon ami* "was so kind, so good! He came to see them often, oh, very often; and when he did not come, he sent them great baskets full of fruit, pears as big as *that!* and toys for little Jack. And Jack loved him with all his heart, yes indeed!"

"And, doubtless, your mamma loves him too?" d'Argenton would inquire, busied in writing something or pretending to write.

"Oh, yes! sir," Jack responded artlessly.

But was his reply as artless as it seemed? The mind of a child is an unfathomable abyss. We never know how far he has any conception of the things whereof he speaks. In that mysterious germination of ideas and feelings constantly going on within him, there are sudden births of thought, flashes of comprehension that come without warning to us; they form a whole, and the child puts the links of the chain together with surprising swiftness.

Was it some intuition of this sort that made Jack understand that every mention of *Bon ami* filled his professor with rage and disappointment? Certainly he talked of him constantly. The child did not love d'Argenton. To the first momentary repulsion was added a feeling of jealousy. His mother

thought too much about that man. During his holidays, or her visits, she asked all sorts of questions about his professor. Had d'Argenton been kind to him? Had he sent any message for her?

"None at all," Jack would answer.

And yet the poet never failed to intrust him with some complimentary speech intended for the Countess. He even gave him one day a copy of *Love's Credo*, but Jack forgot to deliver it in the first place, then managed to lose it, half through carelessness, half through design.

Thus, while these two dissimilar natures were gravitating towards each other, from various and opposite poles of love, the child stood between them, suspicious and watchful, as if he already suspected that he would be caught, crushed, and destroyed in the violent and inevitable shock of their first meeting.

Once a fortnight, on Thursdays, Jack was allowed to dine with his mother, sometimes quite alone, but often in company with "*Bon ami.*" On those days he went to a concert, or to the theatre. These were great occasions for him and for all the "little tropicals," for he always returned from these excursions into domestic life with his pockets full.

One day, arriving at the usual hour, Jack saw that the table in the dining-room was set for three, with a great display of crystal and flowers. "Oh, how lucky!" he said to himself, "*Bon ami* is here!"

His mother approached him, elegantly dressed,

and looking very lovely, wearing in her hair sprays of white lilacs like those in the flower-baskets. A bright fire was burning in the drawing-room, towards which she drew him, saying laughingly:

"Guess who 's there!"

"Oh, I know," said Jack joyously, "*Bon ami*, of course."

For he was accustomed to these little scenes upon his arrival.

It was d'Argenton.

Paler, more fatally fascinating even than usual, he reposed upon a divan, his dress coat, white tie, and starched linen giving him a most imposing appearance!

The enemy within his stronghold! The child's disappointment was so keen that he could scarcely restrain his tears.

For a moment there was an embarrassing silence.

Fortunately the door opened abruptly, violently, as if a horde of Huns had descended upon it, and Augustin announced in a resounding voice, "Dinner is served."

A dreary and tedious affair that dinner seemed for poor Jack. He was uncomfortable, and made others uncomfortable. Who has not experienced at times a sense of isolation that made him long to disappear, to sink out of sight, so keenly he felt his presence to be both an unnecessary and an untimely thing? When Jack said anything, nobody heard him. As for understanding what they said he would not have dreamed it possible.

There were hints, oddly enigmatic phrases, such

as are used in talking over the heads of small children. Sometimes he saw his mother laugh, again she colored, and hid her blushes over her wine.

"Oh, no, no!" she said, and "Who can say?" "Perhaps." — "You think so?" — and phrases that seemed meaningless enough, yet made them both smile. How different from those gay dinners where Jack, seated between his mother and *Bon ami*, was veritable king of the feast directing the laughter and thoughts of his companions according to his caprice. This memory made him venture an unfortunate remark. Madame de Barancy had offered a pear to d'Argenton, and he went into raptures at the exquisite appearance of the fruit.

"That came from Tours," said Jack, perhaps without malicious intent, "*Bon ami* sent us those."

D'Argenton who had begun to peel his pear, laid it back upon his plate, with a movement that disclosed his annoyance at foregoing a fruit of which he was very fond, and the utter contempt inspired by his rival.

Oh the terrible glance the mother bestowed on the child! Never before had she looked at him in that fashion.

Jack did not dare to speak or to stir after that, and the impression of the dinner did not wear off during the evening.

Seated, near each other, by the fireside, d'Argenton and Ida talked together in a low voice,

that confidential undertone which in itself is a kind of intimacy. He told her the story of his life, of his sickly, nervous childhood, buried in an old castle hidden among the mountains. He described its moats and turrets, the long galleries swept by the wind; then followed the story of his artistic struggles, his first writings, the obstacles which his genius had constantly encountered, and those doorways to eminence too low for him to pass through without stooping.

He spoke of the relentless persecutions of which he had been the victim, of his literary enemies, and the terrible epigrams he had directed against them.

"Then I said to him these cruel words —"

This time she did not interrupt. Leaning towards him, her head resting upon her hand, she listened, smiling as if in ecstasy. And so completely captive were her thoughts, that when he ceased speaking, she still listened, and nothing was heard in the room but the tick-tock of the clock, and the rustling of pages which the child fingered idly, half asleep over an album.

Suddenly she rose, trembling.

"Come, Jack, my love; call Constant, and she will take you back again. It is time."

"Oh, mamma!"

He dared not tell her that usually he was allowed to remain much later. He was afraid of paining his mother, and still more he feared that he might read again in her pretty, bright eyes, generally so full of tenderness, the reproving expression that a while before had filled him with such dismay.

She rewarded his docility by embracing him with singular abandon:

"Good-night, child," said d'Argenton, with great solemnity, and drew the child towards him as if to kiss him. The boy offered him his fair, pretty face:

"Good-night, sir."

But the poet pushed him away, as if impelled by some irresistible impulse of repugnance, similar to that he had felt at dinner, when peeling the fine pear.

And yet he was not a gift of *Bon ami*, that child.

"I cannot, I cannot," he murmured, and he threw himself down upon the tête-à-tête and wiped his forehead.

Jack gazed at his mother in amazement, as if to say:

"What have I done to him?"

"Go, my Jack. Take him away, Constant."

And while Madame de Barancy sat closer to her poet, in order to appease him, the child turned with a swelling heart towards the Gymnase Moronval. Entering the dark alley, which seemed still gloomier than usual, because of his sorrow at returning, and in the freezing dormitory, he thought of the professor so comfortably installed upon the divan in the drawing-room, surrounded by lights and flowers, and said enviously to himself: "He is very happy. I wonder how long he will stay."

D'Argenton's exclamation "I cannot," and his

repugnance to kissing little Jack were in part the affectation of his declamatory nature; but there was a certain amount of sincerity in both.

As the child was jealous of him, he too was jealous of the child. The boy represented Ida's entire past, was a living, very living proof of the fact that others had loved her before him. His pride suffered at the thought.

Not that he was so greatly enamoured of the Countess, rather, he loved in her that which he saw so brightly reflected in her frank and limpid eyes, the glorified image of himself. He paused before it with the complacent and egotistic smile that every woman bestows on the mirror which renders her charming. But d'Argenton could have wished that the mirror had never been tarnished by so much as a breath, that it had never reflected another, retaining from the dim past the offensive recollection of so many other images.

This fault was irreparable. Poor Ida was quite powerless to undo it, and could only feel the regret they all utter, "Ah, why did I not meet you sooner?" — thought which cannot in the least calm the tortures of this singular retrospective jealousy, especially when it is heightened by a vanity of extraordinary proportions.

"She should have had some presentiment of me," thought d'Argenton, and a sullen rage smouldered within him merely at sight of the child.

And yet she could not disown or abandon that dear, golden-haired bit of her past.

But gradually, under the influence of the poet, and in order to avoid those painful meetings where each suffered because of their mutual embarrassment, she accustomed herself to sending for Jack less frequently than before, and made fewer visits to the Gymnase. She had already entered the path of sacrifices, and this was not the least of them.

As for her establishment, her carriage, the luxury in which she lived, the poor woman was ready to abandon everything, awaiting but a word from d'Argenton to desert *Bon ami.*

"You shall see," she said, "I will help you. And I shall not be wholly a burden. I shall always have a little money of my own."

But d'Argenton still hesitated. In spite of its apparent exaltation, his was a very cold and logical nature, methodical as a shopkeeper's, and calculating even in its caprices.

"No, no. We must wait. Some day I shall be rich, and then —"

He was alluding to the old aunt in the country who gave him an allowance, and whose heir he would surely be some day. The dear, good woman was so very old!

They had fine plans for the future. They would live in the country, near enough to Paris to have a taste of its life, but far enough away to escape its turmoil. They would have their own little house. He had designed it long ago — a little, low house, with an Italian terrace, covered with vines, and over the door the motto: *Parva*

domus, magna quies. "Little house, great repose." There he would work. He would write a book, his book, the book, *the Book*, that *Daughter of Faust* of which he had been talking for the last ten years.

Then, as soon as that was completed, would follow *The Passion-flowers*, a volume of verse, and *Brazen Cords* a volume of pitiless satire. There were also floating through his brain a host of empty titles, labels of ideas, backs of volumes with nothing inside.

Ah, publishers would appear fast enough then. They would be compelled to approach him. He would be rich, famous, perhaps a member of the Academy, though that institution had seen its best days, and was rapidly decaying.

"But never mind if it is. That does not matter," said Ida. "You must belong to it." Already she saw herself in a corner of the Institute, upon a reception-day, trembling in her retirement, modestly attired as becomes the wife of a great man.

Meanwhile they continued to eat the pears sent by *Bon ami*, who was certainly the most accommodating and least observing of "kind friends."

D'Argenton found those accursed pears excellent, and devoured them, but with a terrible display of ill-humor, with rages and gnashings of teeth, revenging himself upon poor Ida, in sharp and cutting little phrases for whatever there was of indelicacy in his conduct.

Weeks and days passed in this fashion, bringing no other change in their life except a very per-

ceptibly increasing coldness between Moronval and his professor of literature. The mulatto, constantly expecting the Countess to arrive at some decision concerning the Review, suspected d'Argenton of hostility to his plan, and did not mince matters in telling the gentleman what he thought of him.

One Thursday morning, Jack, who left the school very seldom now, was looking out sadly through the many windows of the rotunda-like play-room, upon a beautiful expanse of blue sky, clear and spring-like, which made him long for an airing and the freedom of out-door life.

The sun was already hot, the lilac-branches tipped with green, and even the uncultivated soil of the little garden felt stirrings of life, like a murmuring of invisible springs. Along the Passage cries of children and caged birds were heard. It was one of those mornings when every window is opened to let a little light enter the house, and scatter the darkness of winter — that gloom with which the long nights and the smoke of constant fires fill rooms that have been closed for a long time.

Jack was thinking how pleasant it would be on such a morning to get away from the Gymnase for a while, to have some other horizon than the tall ivy-covered wall at the foot of which the garden ended in a heap of greenish stones and dead leaves.

Just at that moment the bell above the gate rang, and he saw his mother come in, fashion-

ably attired, radiant, in haste, and very much excited.

She had come to take him to the Bois. They need not return until evening. It was to be one of their delightful old-time affairs together. They must ask Moronval's permission, but, as Madame de Barancy brought him the money for the quarter, permission was not difficult to obtain.

"Oh, how delightful," said Jack, and while his mother was informing the mulatto that Monsieur d'Argenton had been obliged to set out for Auvergne, summoned to the bedside of his dying aunt, the child hurried across the yard to dress himself. On the way he met Mâdou, emaciated, sad, busy already with the details of his daily drudgery, and carrying about his brooms and pails without perceiving how full the air was of the perfume of budding things.

As he saw him a wild idea occurred to Jack, one of those thoughts that come to a child who is happy himself and would gladly see all about him in harmony with his happiness.

"Oh, mamma, if we might only take Mâdou!"

Permission was difficult to obtain, because the functions of the little King at the Gymnase were many, but Jack pleaded so well that Madame Moronval declared that for one day she would attend to the negro's duties herself.

"Mâdou, Mâdou!" cried the child, rushing out, "quick, quick! Dress yourself; we shall take you with us in the carriage, and we are going to breakfast in the Bois."

There was confusion for a moment. Mâdou was overcome. Madame Decostère found a tunic, borrowed for the occasion. Little de Barancy jumped for joy, and Madame de Barancy, like some chattering bird, whom every noise excites, gave Moronval no end of details about d'Argenton's journey, and his aunt's hopeless condition.

But at last they started. Jack and his mother sat in the back of the victoria, and Mâdou upon the seat at Augustin's side. It was scarcely a royal seat, but His Majesty had known worse ones.

The drive at the start was charming, along the Avenue de l'Impératrice, which looked so broad, airy, and rural in the early morning. Only a few promenaders were met, those who love to drink in the morning sunshine before the noise and stir and dust of the day, children with their governesses, and little ones in arms, in all the solemnity of their long white robes, others, bigger, with bare arms and legs and floating locks; men and women on horseback rode by, and in the alley set apart for equestrians the freshly-raked gravel still preserved traces of those early canterings, and seemed, lying so close to the green lawns, more like a path through some park than a public road. The same aspect, peaceful, luxurious, and restful, was shown by the villas scattered among the verdure, and their rose-tinted bricks and blue slated roofs on this beautiful morning shone as if washed in the fresh sunshine.

Jack was in ecstasy, hugging his mother, and pulling at Mâdou's tunic.

"Now, are n't you glad you came, Mâdou?"

"Oh, very glad, *moucié*."

They reached the Bois, already green and blossoming in places. There were walks where the tree-tops only were a pale green, or reddened with sap, which gave the branches, bathed in the morning sunlight, a misty appearance. The sap, mounting in the trees, earlier in some cases than in others, lent them various shades, from the green of the tenderest shoot to the evergreen of winter. The hollies, that had borne the winter's snow upon their stiff and bristling leaves, jostled the budding lilacs that peeped out, timid and shivering.

The carriage paused before the Restaurant du Pavillon and while breakfast was in preparation Madame de Barancy alighted to walk around the lake with the children. At this early hour the afternoon processions of promenaders, the reflection of fashionables with powdered and liveried coachmen, horses with nodding plumes, and flashing axle-trees had not as yet disturbed its surface. It had not yet lost the refreshing coolness of the night, which ascended into the sunlight as a light mist. Swans were swimming across it, and slender grasses were mirrored in the limpid water, to which silence and shade and solitude had imparted a semblance of living water; it was full of furrows, ripples, underground springs that leaped to the surface in bright and flashing bubbles. Instead of that motionless sheet that seems a mirror for all the latest fashions and foibles of Paris, the lake had become once more a lake; birds flitted across it,

fins darted through it, and the tasselled willows, fringed with green, dipped in its waters their trailing branches.

What a delightful walk it was! And the breakfast — that breakfast eaten as they sat before the open windows, with the eager, unconscious appetite of schoolboys, attacking every dish with equal impartiality! Not a minute of the repast but was enlivened with peals of laughter. Anything was pretext enough — a bit of bread that dropped, the appearance of the waiter — and those joyous, spontaneous notes were taken up among the branches, and re-echoed by the first twitterings of the birds.

When breakfast was ended the mother proposed that they should go to the Jardin d'Acclimatation.

"Oh, what a fine idea, mamma! Mâdou has never seen that. It will amuse him so much."

They entered the carriage again, following the broad driveway till they reached the gate. In the garden, which was almost deserted, they felt again the same peaceful impression of dawn and freshness which the woods had given them, but here the attraction was greater for the children, because of the abundance of animal life that filled even the smallest thicket, bounding against the palings, and watching them pass, with subtle or with mournful gaze, their pink snouts eagerly sniffing the tempting fragrance of the fresh bread the children had brought with them from the restaurant.

Mâdou, who up to this moment had been interested merely to please Jack, now began to be interested in real earnest. He did not require the

blue labels, which gave these little inclosures the appearance of the numbered cells of a prison, to recognize the animals of his own country. With a mingled feeling of pain and pleasure he watched the kangaroos standing erect upon their hind paws, of such length that they seemed to have the swiftness and elasticity of a pair of wings. It seemed as though some fellow-feeling of pity stirred within him at sight of their exile, that he suffered at seeing them confined in that small space which they could clear at three bounds, in rushing back to their little huts with the speed of an animal that knows his hiding-place is the safest place of all for him.

He paused before those slender railings, painted in light colors to render them more deceptive, where the wild asses and antelopes were penned, without the least regard for their fine hoofs, so light and swift; there were tiny patches of grass stripped quite bare, and the slopes of the small hillocks were so scantily covered that as they trotted by, Mâdou was suddenly reminded of some bit of sunburnt country seen in the distance.

The caged birds excited his deepest compassion. The ostriches and cassowaries, were in solitary confinement in the open air, with an exotic tree to lend additional charm, which made them look, when seen in the perspective of the walks, like some print of natural history; but they at least had a chance to stretch themselves, to scratch in the sun, and among the pebbles, at that fresh, transplanted, newly-made earth which preserves

for the Jardin d'Acclimatation the appearance of being an extemporaneous affair. But the paroquets and the macaws looked sad indeed in that long cage divided into uniform compartments, each one ornamented with a tiny fountain and a tree to perch on, without a single branch or green leaf.

Mâdou, as he looked at these dismal, melancholy places, all the gloomier because the building towers above the little yard, thought of the Gymnase Moronval. In the filth of those small pigeon-houses, the bright feathers were soiled and torn; they told of struggles, of fighting, of dazed mad captives beating against the wrought-iron grating. And the birds of the desert or of the plain, flamingoes with pink feathers and outstretched necks, flying in the form of a triangle across patches of the blue Nile and the pale sky, long-beaked dreamy ibises, perched upon motionless sphinxes, all wore the same commonplace physiognomy, seen in the neighborhood of white peacocks, strutting about conceitedly, and little Chinese ducks, of delicate hues, splashing about contentedly in their tiny lake.

By degrees the garden was filling with people.

It was full of life and noise and animation now, and suddenly, between two avenues, appeared a strange, fantastic spectacle that filled Mâdou with such intense delight that he remained motionless, mute, unable to find words in which to express his amazement and rapture.

Towering above the thickets, the railings, and

almost as tall as the trees, two elephants, of whom as yet could be seen only their enormous heads and moving trunks, advanced slowly, bearing upon their huge backs a motley crowd, that swayed to and fro, women with light parasols, children in straw hats, brown hair and golden, tied with gay ribbons. Following the elephants, at quite a different gait came a stiff-necked giraffe proudly bearing her small, sedate head aloft; her back was also besieged with riders. This singular caravan went on its way, along the winding alley, between the delicate traceries of the young branches, amid shouts of laughter and little excited shrieks, occasioned by being at such a height, by the open air, and a vague nervous dread, which pride, however, restrained.

Beneath the sun which had begun to grow hot, all these spring-fabrics looked rich and silky, and their colors stood in strong relief against the thick rough hides of the elephants. At last they were completely in sight, led on by the driver, unwieldy, loaded, but tranquil, thrusting their long trunks to right and left at the green sprigs or the pockets of those looking on, scarcely moving their long ears, which some child leaning over their backs or some big daughter of the people tickled lightly with the tip of her parasol, or an inoffensive whip.

"What ails you, Mâdou? You tremble. Are you sick?" Jack inquired of his companion.

For Mâdou was really trembling with emotion; but when he learned that he too might be permitted to ride upon the ponderous creature, his

face assumed a calm and grave expression, solemn almost.

Jack declined to accompany him. He remained with his mother, who did not seem joyous or smiling enough for this day of happiness; he longed to cling close to her, to admire her, and walk in the dust of her long, silk skirts, which she allowed to trail regally after her. Seated side by side, they watched the little negro hoist himself upon the elephant's back, in a strange tremor of haste.

Once mounted, he seemed at home, and in his rightful place.

He was no longer a childish alien, whose ways people smiled at, whose speech was grotesque almost; he was no longer the awkward misshapen schoolboy, the little menial, humiliated by servile duties and the tyranny of his master. Beneath his black skin, usually so dingy of hue, life was circulating; his woolly hair bristled savagely, and his eyes, full of the sadness of exile, flashed with the angry fires of a spirit born to command.

Happy little King!

Two or three times in succession he was taken around the walks.

"Again, again!" he exclaimed, and over the little bridge which crosses the lake, between the inclosures of the wild asses, the kangaroos, and the agoutis, he passed and repassed, intoxicated by the heavy and rapid tread of the elephant. Memories of Kérika, of Dahomey, of war and the chase returned to him. He talked to himself in

his own language, and at the sound of that little, monotonous African voice, soft and caressing, the elephant shut his eyes with delight and roared enthusiastically, the zebras neighed, the startled antelopes leaped, while from the big cage of exotic birds, where the sun's rays were redder than elsewhere, came warbling notes mingled with cries and calls, the pecking of noisy bills, and all the tumult of a virgin forest before it is hushed in slumber.

But it was growing late. It was time to descend, to awake from that beautiful dream. And since the sun had disappeared, the wind was rising, sharp and cold as often happens on those first spring days, warm beneath the sun's rays, but followed by frost at night.

This feeling of winter in the air made the children's return dreary and benumbing. The carriage drove towards the Gymnase, left behind it the Arc-de-Triomphe, glowing beneath the last rays of the sun, and plunged into the darkness. Mâdou sat dreamily beside the coachman; Jack's heart was heavy, he scarcely knew why, and, oddly enough, Madame de Barancy was silent. Yet there was something she wished to say, but which, perhaps, must cost her an effort, for she did not speak until the very last moment.

At length she took Jack's hand in her own.

"Listen, my child," she said, "I have bad news to tell you."

At once he understood that some great misfortune was about to befall him, and gazed at his mother with imploring eyes.

But she went on, speaking in a low voice, and very fast.

"I must go upon a long journey. I shall be obliged to leave you, but I will write to you. Do not cry, my dear, I cannot bear to see you cry. Besides — I am not going away for long; we shall be together again soon, oh, very soon, I promise you."

And then she began to tell him all sorts of stories about money-affairs, an inheritance, and various other most mysterious things.

She might have gone on forever, inventing a thousand more stories; Jack did not listen. Dazed, heartbroken, he wept silently in his corner, and Paris, through which they rode, seemed to him utterly changed since the morning, robbed of the sunlight, of spring, of the perfume of lilacs: dismal it was now — a city of woe, for he saw it through a mist of tears, a child who had just lost his mother.

VI.

THE LITTLE KING.

SOME days after this hasty departure, there arrived at the Gymnase a letter from d'Argenton.

The poet wrote his "Dear Director," informing him that the death of a near relative having altered his circumstances, he begged to tender his resignation as professor of literature. A somewhat abrupt postscript conveyed the additional information that Madame de Barancy, obliged to leave Paris very suddenly, confided little Jack to Moronval's paternal care — in case of the child's illness, a letter might be sent to d'Argenton's Paris address with directions to forward.

"Moronval's paternal care!" How he must have laughed in his sleeve, when he wrote those words. Who knew the mulatto better than himself, and the treatment in store for the child at the hands of that institution when its head should learn that the mother was gone, and nothing more to be gotten from her?

On receiving this dry, laconic letter, impertinent in its reserve, Moronval was seized with one of those wild immoderate fits of rage that sometimes overcame him, plunging the Gymnase into the terror, commotion, and dismay that announce a storm in the tropics.

Gone!

Gone with that knock-kneed beggar, that insufferable coxcomb, who had neither talent, nor wit, nor anything of his own. Well! she would get enough of it! But was it not disgraceful that a woman of her age, for she was by no means young, could have the heart to elope in that fashion, leaving that poor child alone in Paris, abandoned to the care of strangers!

And while commiserating the fate of the poor child, there was an ugly look about the mulatto's mouth that seemed to say, "Just wait a little. I'll take care of your Jack for you, and quite paternally too!"

And though his cupidity was disappointed, and his Review had received its deathblow, and his last hope of fortune gone forever, what irritated him most of all was the defiant, insolent air of mystery that surrounded this pair who had become acquainted with each other through him, in his very house, and to whom his home had served as a rendezvous. He hastened to the Boulevard Haussmann for further information, to learn all he might, but there too he met with the same air of mystery. Constant was awaiting a letter from Madame. All he could learn was that there had been a definite rupture with *Bon ami*, that the house was to be given up, and the furniture probably sold.

"Ah, Monsieur Moronval," added the sturdy factotum, "it was a bad day for us when we set foot inside that shanty of yours."

The mulatto returned to the Gymnase, convinced that Jack would be withdrawn next term, or that it would be necessary to send him away, in default of payment. As there could be no special benefit to any one in treating him kindly, Moronval, and indeed the entire establishment, found it quite agreeable to take revenge upon the little de Barancy for all their obsequiousness of the past year.

This began at the masters' table, where from that day, Jack was to be no longer the equal, but the butt and martyr of the others. No more cakes and wine!

He must drink "eglantine" now, just like the rest, that nauseous, muddy, brackish "eglantine," turbid, and full of strange slimy substances and loathsome froth, like the waters of a freshet. And only malicious glances and cutting allusions reached his ears.

They loved to talk about d'Argenton before him, called him a sham poet, egotistic and vain. As for his noble birth, they knew all about that; those gloomy corridors where he himself said his sickly childhood was spent, did indeed exist, not, however, in an old château buried among the mountains, but in a small hôtel with furnished lodgings, kept by his aunt in the Rue de Fourey, amid that network of damp, crooked streets that surrounds St. Paul. The worthy woman was a native of Auvergne, and every one could remember hearing her call out to her nephew, through those gloomy corridors, already mentioned, "Amaury, my boy,

bring me the key of *Ché bi* (sept bis)," and the Vicomte brought her the key of *Ché bi.*

This savage irony, directed against the poet whom he hated, amused the child, but one thing prevented his joining in the noisy merriment of the "little tropicals," abjectly delighted with any pleasantry of Moronval's. Always at the end of these burlesque disclosures there followed allusions to one whom Jack feared he knew, although no name was mentioned. It seemed as if in the minds of all present a link of some kind bound Amaury d'Argenton, that ridiculous, egotistical, colossal failure with that other person whom the child loved and respected most of all.

There was a certain Duchy of Barancy, which figured conspicuously in every conversation.

"How would you locate it, that Duchy?" exclaimed Labassindre, "in Touraine or on the Congo?"

"In any case one must admit that it is very well kept," answered Dr. Hirsch, with a knowing wink.

"Bravo, bravo! Well kept! That's very neat."

And they were convulsed with laughter. The famous Lord Peambock, Major-General of the Indian army, was not forgotten.

"I knew him well!" said Dr. Hirsch, "he commanded the regiment of the thirty-six papas."

"Thirty-six papas! Bravo!"

Jack hung his head, looked at his bread and his plate, not daring to cry, stifled, crushed by this irony. At times, although he could not comprehend the meaning of what they were saying, some-

thing more derisive than usual in the expression of the faces, something coarser in their laugh revealed to him the insult they wished to inflict.

Then Madame Moronval would say to him gently: "Jack, my dear, run out and see to things in the kitchen for a moment."

Then she reproved the others in a low voice.

"Bah!" said Labassindre, "he doesn't understand."

And indeed the poor child did not understand all; but his intelligence was opening to these first sorrows of his life, and tortured itself, vainly seeking a reason for the hatred and contempt he encountered on every side; certain obscure words let fall during these table-talks, remained in his mind, like a suspicion or a stain.

For some time he had known that he was without a father, that the name he bore was not his own, that his mother had no husband; these facts were always the starting-point of his restless reflections. He became very sensitive. One day, big Saïd called him "child of a *cocotte*." Instead of laughing, as formerly, he sprang at the throat of the Egyptian, and clutched it with his little clenched hands, almost strangling him. Moronval appeared in response to Saïd's howls, and for the first time since he entered the Gymnase, little de Barancy made the acquaintance of the lash.

From that day the spell was broken. The mulatto could no longer restrain his corrective zeal, and then, to beat a white was such a pleasure! And now that Jack's lot should be in all

things the counterpart of Mâdou's, it was only necessary to make him a kitchen-boy. But this revolution in the Gymnase did not in the least better the condition of the poor little King. On the contrary he became more than ever the martyr of every one's disappointed ambitions. Labassindre kicked him about, Dr. Hirsch continued to box his ears, and the Father of the Stick made him pay dearly for the collapse of his Review.

"Never pleased, never pleased," repeated the poor little negro, tortured by his master's tyranny. To his despair was added a strange longing for home, caused perhaps by the approach of spring, the return of the heat and sunshine, which made him restless, and especially by that visit to the Jardin d'Acclimatation, from which he had carried away such vivid memories, palpitating with life, so that they seemed like a summons from his distant land.

The melancholy of exile first revealed itself in him by an obstinate silence, a spiritless submissiveness to blows and commands. But later the face of Mâdou wore a determined expression, a look of extraordinary animation. As he went about the house and garden, busied himself with his various occupations, it was as if he moved towards some far-off goal known to none but himself; this was still more apparent in the fixity of his vision, the effect which it produced upon his whole body, that seemed to respond as if some one were going before, and summoning him.

One evening as the little negro was undressing, Jack heard him chirping softly to himself in his native tongue, and asked: "Are you singing, Mâdou?"

"No, *moucié*, me no sing, me talk nigger."

And he took his friend completely into his confidence. He had decided to run away, had been thinking about it for some time, and was waiting for the sunshine, that he might carry out his plan. Now that the sun had returned, Mâdou would return to Dahomey, and find Kérika again. If Jack would go with him, they would go afoot as far as Marseilles, hide in some vessel, and run off to sea together. No mishap could befall them, because Mâdou had his *gri-gri*.

But the other made objections. Wretched though he was, Mâdou's native land did not tempt him. That great red copper basin full of severed heads, recurred to his memory, a sinister recollection. And besides, if he went, he would be farther away than ever from his mother.

"Well," said the negro quietly, "you stay Gymnase, me go all alone."

"And when will you go?"

"To-morrow," answered the negro resolutely, and suddenly closed his eyes and endeavored to sleep, as if he would have need of all his strength the next day.

The following day was "method-day" as it was called at the Gymnase. On that occasion all were gathered into the big reception-room, because the harmonium, necessary accompaniment to the ex-

pressive reading in the Decostère-course was there. As he entered, Jack noticed that Mâdou was silently polishing the immense hall, and thought he had given up all thought of the journey.

For one or two hours the "little tropicals" had been working away, loosening their jaws to arrive at the proper "configuration of words," when Moronval's head appeared at the half-open door.

"Where is Mâdou? Is n't he here?"

"No, my love," answered Madame Moronval-Decostère, "I sent him to the market for provisions."

The word "provisions" occasioned such a joyous expression upon those childish faces, that they could all have given at the selfsame moment the exact configuration of that blessed vocable, had they been asked to do so. They were so strictly dieted! Jack not quite as famished, thought of the conversation of the night before, which, heard as he was falling asleep, was vague as a dream to him.

Monsieur Moronval departed, only to return a few minutes later.

"Well, no sign of Mâdou?"

"He has not returned. I do not know what it means," said the little woman, beginning herself to feel somewhat uneasy.

Ten, eleven, and still no Mâdou. The lesson had ended long ago. It was the hour when there usually arose from the wretched little basement-kitchen hot odors that excited almost beyond endurance the ravenous appetites of the schoolboys.

But this morning none ascended, either of meat or vegetables; and still — no Mâdou!

"Perhaps something has happened to him," said Madame Moronval, more indulgent than her ill-natured husband, who from time to time went to the passage door, stick in hand to watch for the negro.

At last the twelve strokes of noon were heard from every big clock and little clock and belfry in the neighborhood, announcing the breakfast-hour, dividing the labor of the day into two equal portions. That joyous vibration echoed sadly in the hollow stomachs of the inhabitants of the Gymnase. The neighboring factories were silent; even in the hovels along the Passage fires were lighted, and a sizzling was heard, accompanied by appetizing whiffs, but masters and pupils had nothing left to do but to wait for the food that came not.

Cannot your fancy picture that famished establishment, deprived of eatables, and lost, like a raft in distress, amidst an ocean of luncheons?

The "little tropicals" with lengthened faces and eyeballs bulging from their sockets, felt all the ferocity of their ancient cannibalistic instincts revive within them at each fresh pang of hunger. But when it was close upon two o'clock, Madame Moronval decided, born aristocrat though she was, to go to the butcher's herself, not daring to send upon such an errand any one of the famished boys, lest he should devour everything on the way.

When she returned, loaded down with big loaves and greasy papers, she was greeted with an

enthusiastic hurrah, and then, as if the meal revived all those drooping imaginations, each one imparted to the others what he surmised or feared with regard to the little King's disappearance. Moronval himself did not believe any accident had occurred. He had too much reason for anticipating some escapade.

"How much money had he?" was his question.

"Fifteen francs," timidly answered his wife.

"Fifteen francs! Oh, then, it is sure enough. He has run away."

"But he could hardly get back to Dahomey on fifteen francs," said the Doctor.

Moronval shook his head, and started at once to the police.

It was a bad business for him. At any cost he must find the boy, prevent his reaching Marseilles. The mulatto stood in fear of what *Moucié* Bonfils might discover. And then, people are so malicious! The little King might perhaps complain of the treatment he had received, and thus bring discredit upon the school. Consequently in his statement to the chief of police, he was careful to remark that Mâdou had carried away quite a large sum of money, adding disinterestedly that he was not so much concerned about the money, but he could not help thinking of all the dangers to which the unfortunate child might be exposed, poor little King! ruined, an exile, and without throne or country.

The tiger wiped his eyes as he spoke. The police consoled him.

"Do not be alarmed, Monsieur Moronval, we will find him for you."

But alarmed Monsieur Moronval was, notwithstanding, so much disturbed that instead of remaining quietly at home to await the results of the search, as the police advised, he set out afoot to aid them, in company with all the "little tropicals," and Jack with the rest.

Their long and varied expeditions took them to every gate of Paris. The mulatto interviewed the custom-house officers, furnishing them with a description of Mâdou, while the children watched the long roads beginning at the toll-gates, thinking they might perhaps sight in the distance, in some empty wagon, or among some company of soldiers on the march, the monkey-like dusky silhouette of the little King. Then they would go to the prefecture for the report, and in the morning would appear at the various police-stations, as soon as the doors of the lock-up were open for that first rough sorting of unfortunates caught in the nocturnal net that drags up so much misery and vileness within its meshes.

Ah, that horrible net! plunging down to the swarming depths of the great city, — what slime does it bring up! And sometimes that slime is red, and if it is stirred emits a sickening stench of crime and blood.

It was indeed a strange idea to take children there, fill their eyes with all those horrors, make their nerves quiver at the sound of tremulous, supplicating voices, howls and sobs, vile songs

and curses, all that infernal music that proceeds from the lock-up when it is full, winning for it that melancholy, grim sobriquet, *le violon!*

This was what the director of the Gymnase called initiating his pupils into Parisian life.

The "little tropicals" could not understand all of what they saw and heard, but it produced a sinister impression upon them. Jack especially, whose intelligence was keener, more alert than that of the others, returned from these walks heavy-hearted, anxious, pained, and even frightened at those glimpses of that abyss of Parisian life, and thinking sometimes with terror: "Perhaps Mâdou is there!"

Then he reassured himself with the thought that perhaps already the little negro was far away, running with all his might along the road to Marseilles, which Jack fancied was as straight as the letter "I," with the sea at one end of it, and boats all ready to sail.

Each evening, on entering the dormitory, Jack gave a joyous start at seeing his friend's bed empty.

"The little King is running, running away," he said to himself, and for a moment he forgot all the sadness of his own life, his mother's strange desertion of him. But one thing concerning Mâdou's departure troubled him. The weather, which had been so fine the day of Mâdou's disappearance, had suddenly changed. And now there were heavy rains, hailstorms, and even snow. Spring tried to rally her scattered rays, but was

almost routed. There were fitful bursts of sunshine, but the wind blew ceaselessly, accompanied by furious showers, and the "little tropicals," asleep beneath their glazed roof, which cracked and rattled at each gust of wind that shook the frail building, making it groan and tremble, could dream of long sea-voyages, and experience all the sensations of those surrounded by the dangers of the wide and shelterless ocean.

Rolled up in the blankets, to keep out the dreadful cutting draughts that whistled across the dormitory, stinging like lashes, Jack's fancy followed that imaginary road Mâdou-Ghézô must have taken. He saw him crouching by the side of some ditch, exposed to wind and rain, his little red jacket quite useless in defending him from the fury of the season.

But the reality was far worse than anything he had imagined.

"He is found!" cried Moronval, one morning, rushing into the dining-room, as the others were seating themselves at table. "He is found! I have just received word from the police. Quick! my hat and stick! I must go to the station and bring him home."

He was filled with unholy joy and pitiless wrath.

As much to please their master as to gratify their love of noise, the "little tropicals" greeted this news with a formidable "Hurrah!" Jack did not join in that yell of triumph, and he thought to himself at the moment, "Oh, poor Mâdou!"

Mâdou had been at the station all night.

There in that cesspool, among rogues and vagabonds, a human hive, besotted with idleness, fatigue, and drunkenness, huddled pell-mell on mattresses thrown on the floor — there it was that the heir-presumptive to the throne of Dahomey was found by his excellent master.

"Ah, wretched boy! In what a condition, in what a condition I — I — "

The worthy Moronval could not find another word, choked by surprise and emotion; and seeing him throw his two lank arms about the negro's neck, like hungry tentacles, the police-inspector could not help thinking:

"Well, well! there is a master who really loves his pupils."

But in return, the only feeling betrayed by the heartless Mâdou was one of utter indifference. At sight of Moronval, his features remained perfectly expressionless, revealing neither joy, nor pain, surprise, shame, nor even that wholesome dread the mulatto usually inspired in him, dread which should have been intensified under the circumstances.

There was a vacant and lifeless stare in his dull eyes, his skin had grown dingy, its glistening hue quite gone. What emphasized the utter wretchedness of his condition was the frightful and filthy appearance of his whole body, a bundle of muddy tatters. From head to foot, and even in his woolly hair the mud had gathered in layers, more or less recent, the driest of them peeling off in dusty patches.

He looked like some amphibious creature that

has plunged in the water and then rolled about in a sand-bank.

He was shoeless and hatless; the galloon of his cap had doubtless tempted some rascal; he had nothing left but his trousers, worn threadbare, and his ragged red waistcoat, which retained its color only in spots, the rest eaten away by sun and dirt.

What had happened to him? He alone could have said, had he chosen to speak.

All the inspector knew was that upon their rounds, the preceding day, the officers had found him in the quarries, lying upon a plaster-kiln, quite stupefied by the excessive heat. Why was he still in Paris? What had hindered his going?

Moronval did not ask; he spoke not a single word in that long drive they took from the station to the Gymnase.

There was nothing more than an exchange of glances between the director, solemn-faced and triumphant, and the boy, bundled into a corner, exhausted, dazed, and disheartened.

But what glances passed between them! A sharp-edged sword, keen and pitiless, crossing steel with a poor little bent blade, foredoomed to defeat.

When Mâdou passed through the garden, presenting such a pitiful appearance in his rags, so shrivelled and shrunken, Jack could scarcely recognize the little King.

"*Bonjou, moucié*," said Mâdou, his voice full of unspeakable sadness, and for the rest of the day

nothing more was seen of him. Lessons and recreations followed each other in the usual irregular fashion. But from time to time, heavy blows were heard and deep groans proceeding from the mulatto's room. Even when that sinister noise ceased, Jack, in terror, fancied that he still heard them. Madame Moronval herself seemed greatly moved at the sound, and at times the leaves of the book in her hands trembled.

The director appeared at dinner, worn out, but radiant.

"The *miséabe!*" he said to his wife and Dr. Hirsch, "the *miséabe!* he has wrought me up to such a pitch!"

And, in fact, he seemed completely exhausted.

That night when Jack entered the dormitory he found that the bed next to his own was occupied. Poor Mâdou had indeed exhausted his master's strength, and to such a degree, that he was compelled to get to bed, and required assistance for that.

Jack wanted to talk with him, to learn the details of that journey, which had been so short and painful, but Madame Moronval and Dr. Hirsch were there bending over the child; he seemed to be asleep, but his frame was shaken with those convulsive gasps that follow a day of overwork and tears.

"You do not think then that he is ill, Monsieur Hirsch?"

"No more ill than I am, Madame Moronval. A hide like that is as tough as the plate of an ironclad!"

When they had gone, Jack took Mâdou's hand, which looked so black against the blanket; it felt rough and burning, like a brick just from the kiln.

"Good night, Mâdou."

Mâdou opened his eyes, and looked at his friend with a wild, despairing expression.

"It 's all over for Mâdou," he said in a low voice. "Mâdou lost *gri-gri* — Never see Dahomey no more — All over."

And now the reason for his remaining in Paris. Two hours after his flight from the Gymnase, while he was looking in the outskirts of the city for a gate leading into the country, the fifteen francs he had brought with him and the amulet he carried about his neck, passed from it, he never knew how, into the pocket of one of those vagrants of the slums for whom everything that comes their way is welcome, one of those birds of prey that swoop upon anything whose glitter attracts them.

Then he thought no more of Marseilles, nor of its boat, of his journey, certain that without his amulet he could never reach Dahomey; he retraced his steps, and for an entire week, day and night, he roved through the vilest haunts of underground Paris, in search of the talisman. Lest he might be recaptured, and committed again to the custody of the Moronvals, he had shared the nocturnal, stealthy, startled existence of the darkest quarters of Paris — in the resorts of cut-throats and thieves. He had slept in unfinished buildings, waste-places, and drain-pipes, under bridges where

the wind whistled, behind theatre-railings, where the crowd stood waiting in line, and even among the litter left where they had dined.

That little insignificant black figure could slip in anywhere, and every place he found inhabited. Vice had brushed against him with its slimy silent bat's-wings; he had eaten the bread of thieves, for thieves are sometimes charitable; he had witnessed the nocturnal portioning of plunder, and murderers' carousals in the cellars of buildings, he had slept by the side of some dreaming assassin, his childish dreams undisturbed. What were these things to him? He was searching for his *gri-gri*, and all the infamy he passed through made no impression upon him.

In those nether regions of Paris, the little King dwelt as fearlessly as in the forests where he had camped with Kérika on hunting-expeditions, where he had often been awakened in the night by the roaring of elephants and hippopotamuses, and saw under the gigantic trees, dimly outlined, the forms of monstrous beasts, prowling around the bivouac, and felt the undulations of reptiles creeping beneath the leaves, close to him. But Paris with its monsters is more terrible than all the African forests. The negro might have been frightened if he had seen and understood. Fortunately the thought of his *gri-gri* absorbed him, and here as in those far-away hunting-grounds, he was encircled by Kérika's protecting influence.

It is all over for Mâdou!

The little King was too exhausted to say more,

and his companion must have fallen asleep too, — how long he did not know.

In the middle of the night Jack awoke with a start. Mâdou was laughing, singing, chattering to himself very volubly and in his native tongue. He was delirious.

In the morning, Dr. Hirsch, who had been hastily summoned to his bedside, declared that Mâdou was very ill.

"A genuine case of meningitis-encephalitis," he said, rubbing his fingers, which were as shiny and yellow as a game of knuckle-bones. His glasses glistened. He was enchanted.

A terrible man, this Dr. Hirsch! His head was crammed with scientific readings, Utopianisms, and theories; he was too indolent, too desultory in his ideas for any methodical study, it was with difficulty he remembered even a few medical terms, and hid his real ignorance under a confused jumble of words relating to Chinese, Indian, and Chaldean medicine. He had even devoted some time to the study of sorcery, and when a human life fell within his clutches, he was ready to invoke the mysterious powers of magic, and resort to the dangerous nostrums of the sorceress.

Madame Moronval wished to have a reputable physician summoned to the aid of all this madman's science, but Moronval, less humane, and unwilling to incur an expense for which in all probability he would never be reimbursed, considered that Dr. Hirsch would do quite well enough to look after that monkey, and left the child to his care.

Wishing to have his patient entirely to himself, to share him with no one, this strange doctor discovered a complication that might render the disease contagious and availed himself of this pretext to have Mâdou's bed carried to the further end of the garden, and placed in a sort of tool-house, glazed like all the buildings of the ancient photographic study and in which there was a fireplace.

For a week he was enabled to experiment upon his little victim, employing all the medicines known to the most barbarous races to torture him at will. The other offered as little resistance as a sick dog. When the doctor, laden with little phials half-corked, filled and compounded by himself from various malodorous powders done up in packages, entered the tool-house, closing the door carefully behind him, each one thought:

"What is he going to do to Mâdou now?"

And the "little tropicals," to whom a doctor seemed always somewhat of a magician, a sorcerer, shook their heads, rolled their eyes at sight of him.

But they were forbidden to enter the tool-house for fear of infection; it formed a mysterious corner at the end of the garden, a spot surrounded by gloom and mystery and terror, and seemed to await some event more occult and dread than all the doctor's drugs.

Jack longed to see his little friend, to cross that threshold closed with such indefatigable watchfulness. He lay in wait for an opportunity, and at

last, as the doctor rushed through the alley to procure some drug he had forgotten, Jack seized his chance, and, accompanied by big Saïd, entered the improvised infirmary.

It was one of those half-rustic places used as a storehouse for garden tools, cuttings, and hot-house plants. Mâdou's iron bed stood upon the beaten ground. In the corners were yellow flower-pots, piled one upon another, bits of lattice-work and broken glass of bright blue, the tint of the atmosphere when seen in layers. Faded creepers and big bundles of dead roots added to the forlorn appearance of the place, and in the chimney-corner, as if some frail little tropical plant, sensitive to every breath of cold, had taken shelter there, a fire was blazing, filling the hot-house with a stifling and drowsy heat.

Mâdou was not sleeping. His poor little features, which had become more and more faded and shrunken, wore still the same expression of absolute indifference. His black hands twitched under the sheet. There was something of the animal in his utter helplessness, his renunciation of everything about him, in the way in which he turned towards the wall, as if invisible roads had opened for him through those whitewashed stones, as if every crevice in the old building had become a luminous vista leading towards a country known to himself alone.

Jack approached his bed.

"It is I, Mâdou, *Moucié* Jack."

The other looked at him, but neither understood

nor answered. He had forgotten all his French. All the methods in the world could not have made the least difference. Little by little, nature reclaimed this small savage of hers, and in that delirium where one ceases to be himself, and instinct effaces all acquired knowledge, Mâdou spoke no other than the tongue of Dahomey. Jack whispered a few words more to him, very softly, while Saïd, who was older than he, withdrew towards the door, full of terror and anguish, struck by that chill that is felt when above the brow of the dying hover the outspread wings, slowly descending, — the brooding shadow of Death. Suddenly Mâdou drew a deep sigh. The two children looked at each other.

"I think he is asleep," murmured Saïd, very pale.

Jack, who was very uneasy also, answered "Yes, you are right. He is asleep — let us go."

And they both hastened away, abandoning their comrade to I know not what sinister shadow, that enfolded him, seeming still more solemn in that strange place, with its indefinable greenish light, like twilight in the deepest recesses of a garden.

Now night is come. In that black and silent hovel whose door the children closed behind them, the fire on the hearth burns brightly, lighting all the place, darting into every corner as if it seeks some one it cannot find. It gleams among the broken glass, plunges to the very bottom of the flowerpots, climbs along the old trellis that rests against the wall, flickers, roves from place to

place, and still— still, it finds nothing. It wanders about the iron bed, over that little red jacket, whose sleeves are stretched out so peacefully in an attitude of repose; but it seems that there too it finds nothing, for the flame continues to dart along the ceiling and the door, roaming, quivering, until at last, weary and discouraged, perceiving that no fire is needed now, that there is no longer any one for it to warm, it returns to the ashes, and its light is quenched, like that of the poor, sensitive little King it had loved so much.

Poor Mâdou! the irony of his destiny followed him even in death; the schoolmaster hesitated for some time as to whether he should be interred as a servant or as a Royal Highness. On one hand there was the question of economy; on the other hand, an advertisement of some sort would be of benefit to the institution, and pleasing to his vanity; the latter motives prevailed. After some indecision, Moronval made up his mind that now was the time to strike a great blow, and that, as the little King, during his life-time, had not been as profitable as had been expected, it was only fair to derive what advantage they could from his death.

And so they arranged for a pompous funeral.

All the newspapers reprinted a biography of the little King of Dahomey, alas! a very brief biography, as befitted his short life; but adorning and embellishing it was a long panegyric of the Gymnase Moronval and its director. The excellence of the Moronval-Decostère method, the learning

of the doctor attached to the royal child's person, the salubrity of the institution, nothing was omitted, and what was most touching of all in these praises was their unanimity, the conformity of the language they used.

At last, one May day, Paris which, in spite of its innumerable occupations and the feverish bustle of its affairs, is ever on the alert to observe what is going on, Paris saw a strange spectacular funeral procession pass slowly along its boulevards. Four little black boys walked beside a truly regal hearse. Behind them followed a yellow schoolboy in a fez — our friend Saïd, bearing upon a velvet cushion the decorations of what orders no one knows, and insignia that were supposed to be royal. The mulatto, wearing a white tie, came next, surrounded by Jack and the "little tropicals." Then came the professors and friends of the house, and lastly, all the Failures followed pell-mell, a numerous and lamentable assemblage. What bent shoulders and sunken faces, which the cuffs of Fortune had marked with ineffaceable wrinkles — what dim eyes and bald craniums, still haloed however with dreams, what threadbare coats, shoes trodden-down at the heels, defeated hopes, unrealizable ambitions. It was piteous to see them as they passed on, ill at ease in the glare of daylight, and that sinister retinue was in keeping with the fortunes of a little dispossessed King. Were not all of these wretched visionaries pretenders as well to some imaginary kingdom which they could never enter?

And where but in Paris could be witnessed such a burial as this, — a King of Dahomey conducted to the grave by a host of nondescript Bohemians?

To complete the gloom of this melancholy ceremony, a fine, cold, piercing rain fell unceasingly, as if by some fatality the cold were bent on pursuing the little King to the very grave in which he was to lie. Alas! even there, for no sooner was the coffin lowered than Moronval thawed out sufficiently to deliver a discourse full of unfeeling platitudes, emphatic and icy words — that could not warm thee, my poor Mâdou! The mulatto spoke of the virtues, the wonderful intelligence of the deceased, told what a model ruler he would have made some day and ended his funeral oration with the hackneyed observation that has done service so often on such occasions:

"He was a man!" he ended emphatically. "He was a man!"

For those who had been familiar with that monkeyish little creature, so pitiful, so sympathetic, that childhood whose physiognomy and speech had been stunted through brutalizing servitude, Moronval's words were as painful as they were ridiculous.

And yet among all those mock-mourners who lamented Mâdou, there was one whose grief was genuine. His comrade's death had affected Jack greatly, and the little black face he had seen in the toolhouse, wearing that hopeless expression of one utterly abandoned, had pursued him incessantly for the last two days. And with this obsession

mingled at the moment the impression made by that lugubrious ceremony, and the sense of his own wretchedness.

Now that the negro was gone, he felt that he was quite alone, abandoned to the violence of the master. The "little tropicals," however forsaken their condition might seem, had guardians, who visited them occasionally, and would have protested at any violence, had it been evident to them. Jack was abandoned absolutely; he knew this only too well. His mother never wrote to him now; no one in the Gymnase knew even where she was. Ah! if he only knew where to find her, how quickly he would have taken refuge at her side, telling her how very wretched he was.

The boy was thinking of all these things as they walked down the long muddy avenue of the cemetery. Labassindre and Dr. Hirsch walked in front of him, talking so loudly that he overheard them.

"I am sure she is in Paris," said Labassindre.

Jack listened mechanically. "I saw her crossing the boulevard day before yesterday."

"And where is he?"

"He? Why of course, they must have returned together."

He and she — it was all vague enough, and yet the words excited him as much as those table conversations that had tortured him so keenly. And in fact he was not mistaken, for a few moments later, he heard the two names pronounced very distinctly.

So his mother was in Paris, in the same city as

himself, and never came to see him, to embrace him.

"Then I will go to her," he resolved suddenly.

And during all that long walk from Père-Lachaise to the Avenue Montaigne, that one thought possessed him; he would escape, take advantage of the confusion in which the school was returning, scattered by fatigue or conversations carried on in little groups, quite regardless of form and ceremony, now that the effect had been produced and the performance ended as a spectacle.

Moronval, surrounded by his professors and a group of the Failures, led the way and turned about from time to time with a rallying gesture and a "Come on" to big Saïd, who headed the second squad. The Egyptian in turn, transmitted the call and repeated the gesture to the short-legged little fellows, who tried to keep up, but lagged behind wearily, when a "Come on! come on," would start them on a run again, and they succeeded in regaining the main group. But Jack lagged further and further behind, feigning great fatigue.

"Come on!" cried Moronval.

"Come on, come on," repeated the Egyptian. At the entrance of the Champs-Élysées, Saïd faced about for the last time, brandishing his long arms and signalling, but suddenly he dropped them, stupefied and bewildered.

This time little Jack had disappeared.

VII.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY AT NIGHT.

HE walked at first. He did not wish to look as if running away. On the contrary, he sauntered in a lazy, indifferent fashion, but his eyes were wide open, and his legs ready to run at any moment. However, as he came nearer and nearer to the Boulevard Haussmann, a mad longing to run seized him, and his little steps lengthened in spite of himself, his impatience heightened by a terrible anxiety.

What would he find? Perhaps the house might be closed. And if Hirsch and Labassindre had been mistaken, and his mother had not returned, what would become of him? The alternative of returning to the Gymnase after this escapade never once occurred to him. And if it had, the recollection of those heavy blows, and the heartrending groans he had heard all that long afternoon, proceeding from the room where Mâdou and the mulatto had been shut up together, would have filled him with fright and deterred him from the thought of return.

"She is there!" said the child, with a transport of delight, as he saw from the distance that all the windows of the house were raised and the doors

opened wide, as if his mother were just going out for a drive. He rushed on, that he might get there before the carriage should start. But when he reached the hall-way he was startled by the extraordinary appearance of the house.

All was bustle and confusion. It was crowded with people. The porch was full of furniture, — arm-chairs and sofas of light-colored materials, meant for the dim half-light of the boudoir, and looking strangely out of place in the bright daylight of the street. A mirror wreathed with cupids rested against the cold stones of the entrance, pell-mell with faded jardinières, curtains, and a small chandelier of rock-crystal. Fashionably dressed women crowded the stairway, and porters descended the stairs, loaded with furniture, their big, heavy footprints mingling with those light, graceful footsteps upon the heavy carpet. Completely dazed, Jack went upstairs, lost in the crowd; he could scarcely recognize the apartment, in the confusion and disorder caused by the moving and misplacement of the new furniture, odds and ends scattered everywhere. Visitors opened the empty drawers, tapped the wooden presses and leather chairs, stared about them impertinently, and sometimes, in passing the piano, some elegant dame would run her fingers over the notes without pausing even to remove her gloves. The child thought he must be dreaming as he witnessed the invasion of his home by this mob, in which he recognized not a single face, and through which he passed as unnoticed as any mere stranger.

And his mother, where was she? He attempted to enter the drawing-room, but it was crowded with people, who were eying something at the end of the room, and Jack, too small to see anything, could only tell that some one was calling out figures to the sound of a hammer, striking the table in little sharp raps.

"A child's canopy-bed, gilded and upholstered."

Jack saw carried past him by a pair of black paws, the little bed *Bon ami* had given him, the bed in which he had dreamed his happiest dreams. He longed to cry out, "But it 's mine — my bed! I don't want any one to take it away." But a sense of shame restrained him, and so he remained there, lost, bewildered, confused, wandering about in search of his mother, passing from room to room, in the midst of all the confusion of that apartment, thrown open so widely to let in all the glare and the noise of the boulevard, until suddenly in the entry an arm laid hold of him.

"Why, Master Jack! have you left school?"

It was Constant, his mother's maid; Constant in her Sunday finery, decked with a pink-ribboned cap like that of a box-keeper; she was very red in the face, and bustled about, full of importance.

"Where is mamma?" asked the child, in a low voice so full of anxiety and emotion that even the stout factotum's heart was touched.

"Your mother is not here, my poor child."

"And where is she? What is the matter? Who are all these people?"

"They have come to the sale. But do not stay

here, Master Jack. Come down into the kitchen. We can talk better there."

In the basement there was quite a reunion; Augustin, the Picarde, and all the domestics of the neighborhood. Champagne flowed freely around the greasy table where one evening Jack's future had been decided for him. The child's arrival created a sensation; he was surrounded and petted by all the former servants of the house, for, on the whole, they regretted a mistress who had been so easy to please and so indifferent to their wastefulness. As he feared that he might be taken back to the Gymnase again, Jack was careful to tell no one that he had run away, and mentioned an imaginary holiday, of which he had taken advantage to come and discover what news he could of his mother.

"She is not here, Master Jack," replied Constant, discreetly, "and I don't know whether I ought—" Then, yielding to a lofty impulse, she exclaimed, "Well, after all, we have no right to hide his mother's whereabouts from the child."

And so she informed Jack that his mother was living outside Paris, in a village called Étiolles. The child repeated this name several times and fixed it in his memory.

"Is it far from here?" he asked, quite carelessly.

"A good eight leagues' distance," answered Augustin.

The Picarde, who had been in service for a time near Corbeil, differed from this statement by some kilometers. There ensued a lengthy discussion as

to the best route towards Étiolles. Jack listened very attentively, for he had already decided to take that long journey alone and on foot. It seemed that the road passed through Bercy, Charenton, Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, then, turning to the right, and leaving the Lyons road for the road to Corbeil, followed the Seine and the forest of Sénart to Étiolles.

"Yes, that 's right," said Constant. "And Madame lives just at the edge of the wood — a pretty little house with something in Latin over the door."

Jack opened his ears wide, trying to remember all these names, especially Bercy, his starting-point, and Étiolles, his journey's end. In his child's brain these formed two luminous points between which stretched out a long road, dark and uncertain.

The distance did not frighten him. "I shall walk all night," he thought. "Though my legs are very short, I can surely walk eight leagues in that time." Then he said aloud, "Well, I am going, I must return to the Gymnase." There was still one question unasked, a question that burned upon his lips. Was d'Argenton at Étiolles? Would he find again that baneful influence coming between his mother and himself? But he dared not ask Constant about that. Though he did not know the exact truth, he felt that it involved the part of his mother's life that was least honorable, and would not refer to it.

"Then good-by, Master Jack."

The women embraced him, the coachman gave him a hearty grip of the hand, and he found himself once more in the hall, crowded with people witnessing the last of the sale, the auctioneer just leaving, followed by his crier, the Auvergnats disputing among themselves as they carried off the furniture. Without pausing a single moment in the midst of this inexplicable confusion, whilst the things among which he had sought refuge were scattered to the four quarters of the town, the solitary child, himself thrown upon the street by the sudden breaking-up of this adventuress's home, started upon that long journey which might lead him to his only protector.

Bercy!

Jack remembered having gone there not so long before, with Moronval, when they were searching for Mâdou. The way was not a difficult one to find. He had only to reach the Seine and follow it, always ascending. It was a long, long road, but the fear of falling into the mulatto's hands again made him cover the distance more rapidly. At every step some fresh cause of apprehension thrilled him, and he quickened his pace. Sometimes it was Moronval's broad-brimmed hat whose shadow seemed to pass across a wall, sometimes a quick step close at his heels. The searching glance of a policeman terrified him, and amid the thousand noises of Paris, the rolling of carriages, the conversation of passers-by, the panting breath of the great busy city, he seemed to hear the words, "Stop him! stop him!" repeated a thousand

times. To escape from the fear that haunted him, he descended along the bank of the river, and began to run with all his might along the narrow, neat pavement that borders the river.

The day was drawing to its close. The river had risen, and its waters yellowed by the heavy rains that had fallen, dashed against the arches of the bridges, and their glittering iron rings. A wind had sprung up, scattering the last rays of the sun; everywhere the stir and bustle that mark the end of a Paris day, so full and busy. Women were leaving their wash-houses, laden with bundles of wet linen, soiled in places with those dark patches which water leaves upon poor thin material. Fishermen were returning with rods and baskets, brushing against the horses just led back from their watering-troughs. The men who dragged the river were waiting at the doors of the little offices where they received their pay, and all that riverside population, watermen, bargemen with bent backs and woollen caps, crowded upon the banks, mingling with another suspicious-looking, terrible race of river-rovers, plunderers of wrecks, pirates of the Seine — capable of pulling you out of the water for fifteen francs, and throwing you into it for a hundred sous. From time to time some one of these men would turn about as the schoolboy's little tunic hurried past, looking so insignificant against the great landscape along the banks of the Seine.

At every step the river bank changed its physiognomy. At one point it was black, and long

bending planks connected it with the coal barges. Farther on, fruit-peelings made the ground slippery; the fresh scent of an orchard mingled with the smell of mud, and beneath the half-open tarpaulins, where numberless boats were moored, were great heaps of apples, keeping the ruddy freshness of their rustic colors.

Suddenly at one point in the river, the spectator was reminded of some seaport, with merchandise of all sorts scattered about, and steamers with short smokeless funnels. There was a wholesome smell of tar and oil and of voyages. Then the river narrowed again, and a clump of venerable trees bathed their roots in the water, and one might have believed Paris to be sixty miles away, or three centuries behind the times. From the low bank the city presented a peculiar physiognomy. The passers-by seemed more numerous, and closer together, observed from a distance, long rows of heads were seen hanging over the parapets along the quays or the bridges, or leaning idly upon their elbows. It seemed as if from every corner of Paris the idle, the weary, the hopeless had gathered, their eyes riveted upon that river, as unstable as a dream, and yet as sadly monotonous in its flow as the dreariest human life. What strange riddle does that living water ask of each, that so many unfortunates watch it so fixedly, sometimes as if fascinated, again with such bewilderment, such despair in their mute gaze? At moments, when he paused to take breath, Jack grew dizzy, fancying that all those eyes were

watching, following him, and then he started to run again as fast as he could.

Night had come. The arches under the bridges grew darker and darker, until they looked like gloomy, black pits. The bank was deserted, lighted only by that faint glimmer that rises from the darkest waters.

Of the buildings along the quay nothing could be seen but a sharply defined outline of roof-tops, chimneys, and steeples, standing out in dull black against the wan light of the horizon. And these shadows of the air mingled with the fog of the river, forming a faint pale band, through which flashed the light of the first street lamps and the lanterns of passing carriages, shining with the bluish tinge of the fading day.

Although the child had not noticed it, the tow-path had gradually grown higher and wider, until he found himself upon a broad quay, level with the bank, and separated from it only by a few stone posts. There in the gaslight he could see heavy trucks passing under the massive portals and heard the noisy rumbling of barrels; from those immense gateways, warehouses, and cellars, from thousands of casks spread out in rows along the quay, came an odor of wine-dregs, mingled with the mouldy, stale smell of damp wood.

He had reached Bercy, but night had reached it before him. Jack perceived neither fact at first.

The bustle of the brightly lighted quay, for the Seine was wide as a roadstead at this point and multiplied tenfold every object it reflected from

the banks, deceived him as to the lateness of the hour, and besides, his childish imagination, stirred by all the excitement of his flight, was possessed by the fear that he would not be able to get through the gates. He fancied that all the outposts knew already of his flight. He could not rid himself of this thought, or think of anything else.

But once the gate leading out of the city was passed without the slightest difficulty, not a single custom-house officer deigning so much as a glance at that little runaway tunic, when he had turned to the left of the Seine, according to Augustin's direction, and found himself upon a long street where the street lamps glimmered few and far between, the darkness and cold of the night descended upon him, making him shiver and tremble with fear. While he had felt that he was still in the city, among the crowd, he had been in constant terror lest he should be recognized and caught. But now his dread was of a very different nature, an unreasoning alarm, — born of the solitude and deep silence.

But he was not yet in the country. The street was bordered with houses on both sides; as the child went on, these buildings grew farther and farther apart, separated from each other by long wooden palings, great building-yards, and sheds with long slanting roofs. As they grew farther apart, the houses were lower than before; at intervals the tall chimneys of some low-roofed factory stood out against the leaden sky. Farther on, be-

tween two garret-roofs rose an immense six-story building, riddled with windows upon one side, while the other three were vacant and gloomy. This dreary worthless structure stood upon a piece of waste land. But the expiring city, as if exhausted with this last effort, could show nothing more after that than a few wretched hovels, almost level with the ground. The street too seemed to come to an end, sidewalks and posts disappearing, the two gutters running into one. It reminded one of some village high-road which assumes the name of "The Main Street" for some yards.

Although it was not eight o'clock, this long street, gradually disappearing in the darkness of the night, was already silent and almost deserted. An occasional passer-by walked noiselessly upon the muddy road full of puddles; silent, shadowy figures, scarcely visible, glided along the palings, bent upon mysterious errands; and as if to add to the vastness of space, and make the silence still more appalling, there was heard from time to time in the yards of deserted factories, the prolonged howling of dogs.

Jack was alarmed. Every step took him farther away from Paris, from its sounds, its lights, deeper into the night and the silence. At this moment he reached the last shanty, a wretched wineshop, but still lighted, sending along the road a long luminous band that for the child seemed to mark the limit of the inhabited world.

Beyond that lay darkness and the unknown.

For some moments he was unable to decide

whether he should go further. "What if I go in and ask my way?" he thought as he saw the shop. Unfortunately, he had not a single sou in his pocket. The proprietor was snoring away at his counter. Around a small, rickety table two men and a woman were drinking, leaning upon their elbows, and talking in an undertone. At the sound the child made in pushing the half-open door, they raised their heads, and looked at him. Their faces were wan, forbidding, terrible. Such faces Jack had seen before at the lock-up, those mornings when he was one of the party in search of Mâdou. The woman wore a red jacket and a net. Her features were especially repulsive.

"What does he want?" asked a hoarse voice.

One of the men got up, but Jack took to his heels in terror, and cleared the lighted space in front of the shop at one bound. Behind him he heard a volley of oaths, and the clatter of the door as it closed. Rushing like mad into the darkness of the night, which seemed to shelter him now, he ran with all his might, and never stopped, until, long after, he found himself in the open country.

Far away, right and left, fields stretched before him, bounding the horizon on all sides.

Only a few market-gardeners' cottages, new and low, looking like tiny, white blocks, dotting the inky blackness of the night, broke the monotony of the view. Behind him lay Paris, still visible in the distance, Paris and the tumult of the mighty city; all that part of the heavens reddened with

its lights, ruddy as the reflection of a forge-fire. From all its suburbs Paris can be recognized by that band of light, enveloped like some luminary in the glittering atmosphere created by its motion.

The child remained there, motionless and amazed.

It was the first time in his life that he found himself out-of-doors so late at night, and alone. And besides, he had neither eaten nor drunk anything since morning, and was suffering from a terrible, intense thirst. Now he began to understand how formidable was this adventure he had started upon. Perhaps he was on the wrong road, and going farther and farther away from that dear, distant Étiolles he longed so much to see. And even if he had taken the right direction, what strength he would need to reach his journey's end!

Then he decided that he would lie down in one of the ditches at the side of the road, and sleep there until daybreak. But as he approached it, just in front of him, he heard some one breathing slowly and heavily. A man lay there, his head resting upon a pile of stones, looking like a bundle of rags against the white stones.

Jack stopped short as if petrified. His legs failed him; he trembled and was incapable of taking a single step in either direction.

To add to his terror, this unspeakable, loathsome thing began to move, to groan, to stretch itself in its sleep.

The child recalled the murderous glance of the woman in the red jacket, the brutal figures he had seen prowling about the walls, he felt that the thing he saw sleeping upon the stones had perhaps as vile a face as those, and he trembled lest it should open its eyes, lest that long bestial body, with its shoes bolt upright, should suddenly spring up, upon the muddy road.

The enclosing darkness was peopled for him with spectres like these; they crouched in the ditches; they hindered his passing. It seemed to him that if he stretched out his hand in either direction, he must touch one of them. Ah! if the wretch who had dropped upon that heap of stones to sleep off his liquor or his crime, had awakened, sprung upon him, Jack could not have found strength to utter a cry.

A light, and the sound of voices upon the road, roused him from his stupor. An officer hastily returning to his fort, one of those small, detached posts on the outskirts of Paris, was walking with his orderly, who had come with a lantern to meet him, on account of the darkness of the night.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said the child, in a soft voice, tremulous with emotion.

The soldier who carried the lantern raised it in the direction of the voice.

"This is a bad time to be travelling, my boy," said the officer. "Are you going far?"

"Oh, no, sir, not very far, quite near here"— Jack replied, not caring to confide his great undertaking to any one.

"Well, we can go a part of the way together. I am going as far as Charenton."

What delight it was for the child to walk in company with those two gallant soldiers, to regulate his short steps by theirs, to walk in the light of that hospitable lantern, which beat back the shadows of night upon all sides, making them seem thicker, more appalling. He had discovered, too, that he was on the right road, for the names of the places he heard them mention were those Augustin had named.

"And here we are," said the officer, stopping suddenly. "Well, good night, my boy. And I advise you not to venture out again upon these roads alone. The suburbs of Paris are not safe."

And the two soldiers with their lantern disappeared down a little side-street, leaving Jack alone once more, at the entrance of the main street of Charenton.

More street-lamps, as at Bercy, dingy pot-houses, from which drunken songs arose and the noise of brutal disputes, the voices sounding louder and coarser because all things around were wrapped in slumber. Nine o'clock rang out from a church-tower, behind which stretched rows of houses and gardens. Then he found himself on the edge of a quay, crossed a bridge which seemed to span an abyss, so black was the night. He would have liked to pause, to rest a moment against the parapet, but the songs he had heard a moment before, coming now in snatches from the streets, sounded nearer, and, pursued by fresh terrors, the poor

child began to run towards the open country, where at least his fears were less tangible.

And now he saw no longer a suburb of Paris, with fields intersected by factories. He passed farms and stables whence issued rustlings among the straw, and the reeking odor of wool and manure. Then the road widened once more, and he saw more ditches, to which there seemed to be no end, symmetrical heaps of stones, and low milestones that measure the distance for weary travellers.

That silence stealing through space, that repose as of death seems to the child like a sleep pervading all things, and he fears lest he shall hear again that heavy breathing which terrified him so when he heard it a while ago on that pile of stones. Even the light sound of his own footsteps frightens him, and at times he gives a startled glance behind him. The pale light of Paris still glimmers upon the horizon. In the distance is heard the rattling of wheels, the tinkling of bells. The child thinks that he will wait, but nothing passes, and that invisible wagon whose wheels seem to turn on so laboriously, is lost in a distant point of the horizon, then returns, stops, and finally starts again upon the capricious windings of some steep road, and never makes up its mind to appear.

Jack continues his journey. Who can that man be, waiting for him at the end of the road? One man? there are two, three! No, they are only trees, tall poplars, that quiver in every leaf although they cannot bend; then he sees elms,

ancient French elms, with gnarled twisted trunks and immense boughs and spreading foliage; Jack passes on, surrounded by nature, enfolded in the mysteriousness of one of those spring nights when we can almost hear the grass grow, the buds uncurl, the earth open to give life. All these confused murmurs frighten the child.

"If I sing, then perhaps I shall not be afraid!"

And in the midst of the darkness he remembers a lullaby, an air of Touraine, with which his mother used to sing him asleep in his little room, after the light was out.

"My little shoes are red,
My pretty one, my dear."

It was a little quavering sound that shivered in the chill air, and piteous to hear, as the terrified child sang upon the long dark road, using his song to guide him on, a tremulous string that vibrated through the night. But suddenly he paused in his song.

Some awful thing was approaching, something blacker than the space that surrounded him. It seemed as if the shades of some bottomless pit were advancing upon the child to engulf him.

Before he could see or distinguish any object, he heard sounds.

At first there were cries, human cries, but almost inarticulate; they resembled sobs or howls — then heavy blows, mingled with the tumult of a terrific shower, a storm that seemed about to descend upon him, borne onward by that black cloud.

Suddenly a horrible bellowing resounds. Oxen, an entire drove of them, are shut up between the two ditches. They surround little Jack, grazing by him, jostling him. He feels the warm breath of their nostrils, the swish of their strong tails, the heat of their great flanks, all the odors of the stable, tumultuously stirred up. The herd passes on like a whirlwind, guarded by two stout dogs and two enormous fellows, half herdsmen, half butchers, who run behind the savage undisciplined beasts, driving them on with blows and yells.

The child is left behind, senseless with terror. He dares not go on. These have passed, but may not there be more of them? Where shall he go? What will become of him? Shall he go across fields? And what if he loses his way? The night is so dark. The tears come, and he falls upon his knees and wishes he could die there. But the rumbling of a carriage, the gleam of two lamps peering out at him from the distance like two friendly eyes, revive him. Emboldened by fear, he calls out:

"Monsieur, monsieur!"

The carriage stops and from its hood a big cap with ear-laps is thrust out, and bends forward to discover who may be the owner of that timid voice which seemed to come almost from the ground.

"I am very tired," said Jack, all of a tremble, "will you let me ride in your carriage a little while?"

The big cap hesitates, but from the back of the carriage a woman's voice comes to the child's

rescue: "Oh, the poor little fellow! Let him get in."

"Where are you going?" inquires the cap.

The child bethinks him for a moment; like every fugitive that fears pursuit, he carefully conceals the real goal of his journey.

"To Villeneuve-Saint-Georges," he answers on the spur of the moment.

"Very well, jump in."

And he finds himself in the carriage, snugly wrapped in a warm blanket, between a fat man and a stout lady who, by the light of the cabriolet, eye curiously the little schoolboy they have picked up upon the road. Merciful Heavens! where can he be going so late at night, and all alone? Jack longs to tell them the truth. Just to be near these worthy people inspires him with confidence. But what if he should fall again into Moronval's clutches? So he invents a story. His mother is staying in the country with friends; she has been taken suddenly ill. He had just learned it that night, and had started out alone, afoot, because he was too impatient to wait till to-morrow for the train.

"I can understand that," said the lady, whose air was as kindly as artless; the cap with ear-laps seemed to understand too, but it delivered some very wise observations concerning the imprudence of a child's travelling about at such an hour. "There are dangers of all sorts"— the cap feels so warm and comfortable that it grows quite oracular, enumerates them to its young friend, and ends by

asking in what part of Villeneuve his mother's friends live.

"Quite at the end of the town," Jack answers quickly. "The last house on the right."

Fortunately for him the night and the hood of the carriage hide his blushes. Unfortunately the questioning is not ended. The husband and wife are great talkers, and as inquisitive as all their kind, with whom one cannot remain for five minutes without knowing all their affairs. They are linen-drapers of the Rue des Bourdonnais, and every Saturday they go to their pretty little house in the country, to brush off the stifling dust of their business in the city, a profitable business, which will soon enable them to retire to their little green nest at Soisy-sous-Étiolles.

"Is that very far from Étiolles?" asks Jack with a sudden start.

"Oh, no, it touches Étiolles," answers he of the big cap, with an amicable touch of the whip to start up his beast.

Oh misery!

If he had not told that lie, if he had merely said that he was going to Étiolles, he could have continued his journey in that delightful carriage that rolled so easily over the road in the wake of that friendly furrow of light, all his fears at rest. He could have basked in all that atmosphere of comfort, stretching out his tired little legs, sleeping wrapped in the shawl of this lady who asked him every moment how he felt, and whether he was warm enough. Just then the cap uncorked

a bottle of something strong and made him take a swallow, to cheer him up.

Ah, if he could only have gathered courage to say: "It was not true. I told a lie. I am not going to Villeneuve-Saint-Georges. I am going further, much further. To the place where you are going." But then these good open-hearted people would have despised him. He would have forfeited their trust. Rather than that he preferred to be swallowed up again in the horror from which their pity had rescued him. And yet when he heard them say that they were reaching Villeneuve, he could not restrain a sob.

"Don't cry, my dear," said the lady. "Perhaps your mother may not be as ill as you think. It will do her good to see you."

At the last house in Villeneuve the carriage stopped.

"That 's the house," said Jack.

The wife kissed him, the husband shook his hand, as he helped him to alight.

"Ah, you are lucky to have reached the end of your journey. We have still twelve good miles to make."

And he too had those twelve long miles to cover!

Oh, it was terrible.

He went up to the gate, as if about to ring.

"Good night," his friends called out.

He answered "Good-night," in a voice choked with tears, and the carriage, leaving the Lyon road, turned to the right, and entered a road bordered

with trees, its lamps describing a great luminous arc, in the darkness of the plain. The mad thought came to him that perhaps he might overtake that protecting light, keep up with it, follow it on the run. He rushed after it, seized with a wild fury, but his legs had grown weaker from resting, and the light had made his eyes blinder to the thick shades of night, and they refused to serve him.

After a few steps he was compelled to stop; he tried to run once more, but at last he fell to the ground, exhausted, bursting into tears, while the friendly carriage jogged quietly on, never suspecting that it had left behind it such profound, complete despair.

He lies there at the side of the road. It is cold, and the ground is damp. No matter. He is overmastered by fatigue. About him is a great stretch of fields. The wind comes in those long gusts that are always felt when it moves across broad sweeps of land or sea; little by little, all the sounds of the plain, the rustling of the grass, the swaying of leaves are blended in one great sea of sighs and sounds that rock and lull the child, singing him to sleep.

But a frightful noise startles him out of his sleep. What can it be? His eyes scarcely opened, Jack sees upon an embankment a few yards away, a terrible, monstrous creature pass by, a puffing, roaring beast, with two enormous blood-red, bulging eyes, and long black coils that emit sparks as they unwind. The monster speeds through the

darkness, like the trail of a huge comet, whose fiery body might almost rend the air with a terrific crash. Wherever it passes, the blackness of the night is riven, and a sign-post, a clump of trees appear; then darkness closes in again, and only when the apparition has almost disappeared, and nothing can be seen of it save a little green flame, does the child comprehend that it was a night-express.

What o'clock is it? Where is he? How long has he been sleeping? He does not know, but his sleep has hurt him. He awakes quite numb and stiff in every limb. He dreamt of Mâdou. Oh! that terrible moment when the dream banished upon awaking, recurs to the mind, and seems so poignantly real! The dampness of the ground had chilled him through and through, and Jack dreamt that he was lying yonder in the cemetery, at the side of the little King. He shivers just at the remembrance of that terrible cold, so heavy and suffocating. He still seems to see Mâdou's face, and feels that little icy body touch his own. To escape from the thought that haunts him, he gets up, but on that road which the night-wind has dried and hardened, his footsteps sound so loud that he believes he hears other footsteps following. Mâdou is there, behind him.

And he starts off again at a mad pace.

On, on, through the darkness and stillness. He traverses a village wrapped in slumber, passes beneath a square belfry tower that hurls upon his head its big, clanging heavy notes. Two o'clock!

Another village is passed. The clock strikes three. On and on! His head whirls, and his feet burn. But still he goes on. If he should pause, he fears lest that phantom of his dream should seize him, that terrible phantom which is put to flight when he walks. From time to time he meets wagons covered with big awnings; they seem to be in a state of somnambulism; even the driver and the horses have fallen asleep.

The weary child inquires: "Am I far from Étiolles?"

A grunt is the only answer.

But soon another traveller will be journeying upon the same road as he. A traveller whose setting-out is proclaimed by chanticleer, and the light murmur of frogs at the river-brink. It is Day itself, hiding in a curtain of clouds, uncertain as yet which path to take. But the child feels its approach, and with all nature eagerly awaits the promise of a new day. And suddenly just ahead of him in the direction of that village of Étiolles where he has been told that his mother is, just on that side of the horizon, the sky is rent asunder and opens. At first it is only a pale line of light fringing the dark skirts of the night, no more. But the band widens and there is a tremulous glimmer of light, like the uncertain flicker of a flame seeking the air to aid its ascent. Jack advances towards that light, in a frenzy of expectation that lends him the strength of ten. For something tells him that there he shall find his mother, and that there too is the end of that terrible night.

And now appears a nimbus of light. It looks like a great clear eye, bathed in tears, tenderly, silently watching the child's approach. "I am coming, I am coming," he is tempted to call in answer to that blessed light that beckons him. The way has begun to grow white, and frightens him no longer. It is a fine road now, without stones or ditches. The carriages of the rich must roll luxuriously over such a road. On each side bathed in dew and in the roseate light of dawn, stately dwellings spread out their broad stone steps, their lawns already dotted with flowers, their winding walks, and fugitive shadows flitting across the sand.

Between the white houses and the fruit walls, vineyards and verdant slopes descend to the river, which emerges from the night, mottled with dark blue, light green, and rose tints.

And still that light spreads through the sky, growing nearer and nearer.

Oh, arise and shine, maternal dawn! lend thy warmth and hope and strength to the weary child hastening on with outstretched arms.

"Am I far from Étiolles?" Jack asks of some navvies who pass by in silent groups, half awake, their toolbags slung over their shoulders.

No, he is not far from Étiolles. He has only to follow the forest "straight ahead."

The forest too is awakening. The great green curtain stretched along the road flutters. Such a chirping and cooing and warbling!

From the sweetbrier hedge answers are sped to

the venerable oaks. The branches rustle, bend beneath the sudden descent of wings, and while the last shadow of night is scattered, while the night birds with heavy and silent flight return to their mysterious retreats, a lark ascends from the plain, its delicate wings outspread, soars with sonorous vibrations tracing that first invisible furrow that on a perfect summer day, binds the deep peace of the sky with all the tumultuous sounds of earth.

The child can walk no longer. He drags himself along. An old woman in tatters passes him, leading a goat. Her face is evil, but he asks again:

"Am I far from Étiolles?"

She looks at him savagely, but points towards a little stony path that ascends narrow and straight from the edge of the forest. In spite of his weariness, he goes on. The sun begins to grow warm. The dawn has fled; in its place a dazzling light that glows like a furnace. Jack understands that he is near his journey's end. He goes on, bent and tottering, stumbling over the stones that roll away from his feet; still he goes on.

At last he sees a steeple rising above some roof tops surrounded by a mass of green. One last effort. He must reach that place. But his strength fails him.

He sinks, pulls himself up, falls again, and then through his throbbing lids he sees quite near him a pretty little house, overgrown with vines, wistarias in flower, and climbing roses, that reach the

Jack and his mother


ADRIEN-MOREAU

very top of the little pigeon-house and the turret, all pink with the color of new bricks. Above the door, between the wavy shadows of the lilacs already in blossom, is an inscription in golden letters: "*Parva domus, magna quies.*"

Oh, that pretty, peaceful little house, bathed in the golden sunlight! The blinds are still closed, but there are signs of life, for the fresh, joyous voice of a woman is heard singing:

"My little shoes are red,
My pretty one, my dear."

That voice, that song! Can he be dreaming? And now the shutters are thrown open, and a woman appears all in white, a loose morning-gown, her hair carelessly twisted, and with the dazed expression of one just awakened from slumber.

"Mes souliers sont rouges,
Salut, mes amours!"

"Mamma! Mamma!" Jack calls feebly. The woman pauses in amazement, looks about for a moment, dazzled by the light of the rising sun, and then suddenly she catches sight of that pale, mud-stained, wretched little figure, more dead than alive.

She utters a loud cry: "Jack!" In a moment she is beside him, and with all the warmth of her mother's heart she revives the half-dead child, benumbed with the terror and anguish, the cold and gloom of the past night.

VIII.

PARVA DOMUS, MAGNA QUIES.

"No, no, my Jack, no, my darling, do not be afraid, you shall never return to that dreadful Gymnase. Beat my child! They dared to beat my child! You did right to run away. And that miserable mulatto dared to raise his hand to you! He did not know that by right of your birth alone, to say nothing of your color, you could have had him flogged. You should have said to him: 'Mamma has had mulattoes to wait upon her.' Now, now, don't look at me with such woeful eyes. I tell you, you shall not return. In the first place, I do not want you to leave me. I will arrange a pretty little room for you. You shall see how delightful it is in the country. We have animals of all sorts, chickens and rabbits, a goat and a donkey. Why! this house is a perfect Noah's Ark! But that reminds me, I have not fed my chickens. Your coming has upset me so! Oh, when I saw you out there in the road, in such a condition! Well, well! You must try to go asleep, and rest a little. I will wake you for dinner. But first, drink a little cold broth. You remember what Monsieur Rivals said — All you need, to get well, is sleep and nourishment.

Mother Archambauld's soup is fine, is it not? Poor darling! To think that while I was asleep you were wandering across the country, all alone! It is terrible! Do you hear my chickens calling me? I must go to them. Sleep well."

And she went out lightly on tiptoe, very happy, and as charming as ever, though slightly tanned by the country air, and looking a little over-dressed in a conventional rustic costume of the time, its brown linen much trimmed with black velvet, a leghorn hat with drooping flowers on her head. More of a child than ever, she played at being in the country.

Jack could not sleep. The few hours' rest he had had since his arrival, a bath, Mother Archambauld's broth, and above all the wonderful elasticity of youth, its supple powers of resistance, had overcome the weariness of his limbs. His eyes wandered about the room enjoying the comfort of these new and peaceful quarters.

How unlike the former splendor of that luxurious apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann, padded, upholstered, and stifling. He found himself in an airy room, hung in light chintz, with Louis XVI furniture, white and gray, without the least attempt at gilding. Outside, the peace and calm of the open country. the rustling of branches against the windows, the cooing of pigeons upon the roof, and his mother's cries of "*P'tit, p'tit*" came up to him from the yard, with the varied cries, the clucking and stir caused by a handful of barley.

Jack enjoyed his nearness to those soft bustling

sounds that broke the surrounding silence. He was happy, at rest. One thing alone troubled him. In front of him, over the foot of the bed, hung d'Argenton's picture; the pose was affected and arrogant; his hand lay upon an open book, and his cold faded eyes stared into space.

The child thought, "Where is he? Where does he live? Why have I not seen him?" At last, ill at ease, followed by that photographic stare, which seemed to question or reproach him, he got up and went down to his mother.

She was very much occupied with the care of her chickens, feeding them with an elegant awkwardness, gloved to the elbows, her little finger upraised, her dress slightly raised on one side, displaying a striped petticoat and high-heeled shoes.

Mother Archambauld laughed at her awkwardness, attending to the rabbit-cages herself. This Mother Archambauld was the wife of a gamekeeper and was cook and housekeeper at the Little Alders, as the people of the village called the house inhabited by Jack's mother, on account of a clump of young alders at the end of the garden:

"*Jésus-Dieu!* but he is handsome, that lad of yours," said the peasant, filled with admiration, as Jack appeared in the yard:

"Is he not, Mother Archambauld? What did I tell you?"

"But mercy on us, he looks more like his mother than his papa, that is certain. Good-

morning, my pretty one. May I give you a kiss?"

And she rubbed against the child's face her tough old skin that smelt of the food with which she had been feeding the rabbits. At the word "papa" Jack had raised his head.

"Well, since you cannot sleep, we will take a look at the house together," said the mother, who very soon tired of any one occupation. She let down the folds of her dress again, and showed the child over that original dwelling only a stone's throw from the village, the embodiment of that vision of comfort in solitude dreamed by all poets, but which more frequently is realized by some prosperous grocer.

The main building had once been a hunting-lodge attached to a great Louis XV château, of which there are so many in that part of the country, but in the general division of the property it had started upon an independent existence of its own, far removed from that of the ancient manor. To the old stone building there had been added a new turret, with a pigeon-house and weathercock, which gave the place the aspect of the trim habitation of some country squire. They visited the stables, the shed, and the orchard, an immense orchard opening upon the forest of Sénart. They ended with the turret. A winding stairway lighted by colored panes led to a large round room pierced with four pointed windows, and furnished with a circular divan upholstered with some Algerian material. A few artistic curiosities were there,

some old oaken chests, a Venetian mirror, ancient tapestries, and a tall Henri II chair of carved wood was placed like a throne in front of a large writing-table littered with papers.

On all sides, a lovely landscape of wood and valley and river was unfolded — varied at each window, sometimes bordered by a curtain of green foliage, and again vanishing in airy and luminous distance, far beyond the slopes of the Seine.

"This is where HE works," said the mother religiously, as she stood on the threshold.

Jack did not need to ask what HE was mentioned in that awestruck tone.

Still in a whisper, as if in a sanctuary, she continued, not looking at her son:

"At present he is travelling. He will be with us in a few days, I shall write him that you are here; he will be pleased, for, in spite of his severe manner, he is, I know, the best of men, and fond of you. And you also must love him, my little Jack, otherwise, between you both, I should be very unhappy."

As she spoke, she gazed at d'Argenton's portrait hanging on the wall at the end of the room, an oil-painting of which the one in the chamber had been but a photograph. Indeed the poet's likeness was to be seen in every room, not to mention a bust of him in Florentine bronze, which was enthroned in the middle of a plot of grass at the entrance to the orchard; peculiar and significant fact, — there was no other portrait but his in the entire house!

"Do you promise me, Jack, that you will love him?" asked the poor fool, as she looked at the formidable moustached image.

The child hung his head, and answered, not without effort:

"I promise."

Then she closed the door, and they descended the stairs without a word. That was the only cloud that darkened that memorable day.

It was so pleasant to be together, by themselves, in the great dining-room, decorated with crockery, where the thick steaming cabbage soup had the perfume of an aristocratic caprice. They could hear Mother Archambauld bustling about in the kitchen, washing the dishes. Around the house, silence, that deep silence of the country, hovered like some mysterious guardian angel. Jack could not cease admiring his mother. She, too, thought that he had grown handsome, tall and strong for his eleven years. And they kissed each other between each mouthful like a pair of lovers.

In the evening they had callers. Every night Father Archambauld came to fetch his wife home, for they lived at quite a distance, in the forest. Jack and his mother insisted he should sit down in the dining-room.

"Come, now! a glass of wine, Father Archambauld, you must drink my son's health. Is n't he a darling? You 'll take him with you sometimes for a run in the woods?"

"Oh, certainly, Madame d'Argenton."

And raising his glass, the ruddy and sunburnt

giant, the terror of every poacher for miles, cast from left to right a glance that night-watches among thickets and trees had rendered so keen that it could not remain fixed for a moment.

To hear his mother addressed by that name of d'Argenton vexed our friend Jack a little. But as he had no very definite notions concerning the dignity or the duties of life, with childish levity, he was speedily diverted by other thoughts, especially by the promise of a squirrel-hunt which the keeper repeated before he left, calling his two dogs, who lay panting under the table, and putting on over his light curls the forester's-cap worn by keepers in the State service.

After the couple had left, the sound of a carriage was heard, rolling slowly and laboriously along the steep and stony road.

"Why! that must be Monsieur Rivals. I recognize the slow trot of his horse. Is that you, Doctor?"

"Yes, Madame d'Argenton."

It was the Étiolles doctor returning from his rounds, and he had come to inquire after his little patient of the morning.

"There! I told you it was only fatigue. Good-evening, my boy."

Jack looked at the big, red, blotchy face, the short, thick-set, bent figure, clad in a long coat that just grazed his heels, the rough, white, bushy hair, and that rolling gait which was the result of twenty years spent as a naval surgeon.

How kindly, how true-hearted he seemed!

Ah, what good people these were, how happy he felt among such open rustic folk, far away from that horrible mulatto and the Gymnase Moronval.

After the doctor had gone, they fastened the big bolts on the door. Silence and darkness enfolded the house, and mother and child retired to their room for the night.

There, while Jack slept, she wrote her d'Argenton a long letter, announcing her son's arrival, and endeavoring to excite his compassion for the uncertain lot of the little creature whose peaceful, regular breathing she heard behind the curtains near her.

She did not feel reassured upon this subject until two days later, when she received from Auvergne the poet's answer.

Though full of remonstrances and allusions to the weakness of the mother, the undisciplined nature of the child, the letter was not as terrible as might have been expected. On the whole, d'Argenton had been considering the enormous expense involved in educating Jack at the Moronvals, and while disapproving of the boy's running away, he thought it not a bad thing, on the whole, as the school had gone completely to the dogs. (Why! how could it be otherwise, since he was no longer there?) As concerned the child's future, he would take charge of it, and on his return, which would be a week later, he would decide what was to be done.

Never again, either in childhood or manhood, did Jack enjoy a week of such perfect days as that

week, so beautiful, so happy, so full. His mother all to himself, the woods, the yard, the goat were his! He could climb up the stairs ten times a day after his Ida, go wherever she went, laugh when she laughed, without knowing why, — in short his happiness was complete, a happiness made up of innumerable insignificant but joyous events impossible to relate.

Then came another letter, and his mother said: "He will be here to-morrow."

Although d'Argenton had said he was willing to receive the child, to be kind and indulgent towards him, the mother felt uneasy and desired to prepare for the meeting. Consequently she did not allow Jack to go with her in the carriage, that was to bring the poet from the station at Évry. Greatly embarrassed, she read him a lecture which was quite painful for both; she spoke as if both had been accomplices in some unpardonable crime. "You are to remain at the end of the garden. You understand? You must not rush forward to meet him. You will wait until I call you."

Oh, how excited Jack felt! He spent that hour of waiting, walking back and forth in the orchard, watching the stony little path until he heard the first grinding sound of the wheels.

Then he fled and hid behind the currant-bushes. He heard them enter the house,—His voice, severe and unsympathetic, his mother's softer even than usual, answering, "Yes, my love," "No, my love."

At last, through the foliage, he saw a window open in the turret:

"Jack, be quick! You may come up."

His little heart beat very fast as he went up the stairs, and he was almost choking from fear. He felt upon entering that he was ill prepared for so serious an interview, and was overawed at sight of that pallid face against the sombre background of the chair, and disturbed by the embarrassment of his mother, who dared not even stretch out her hand to the frightened child.

Then he stammered "Good morning," and waited.

The lecture was brief, affectionate almost, for his attitude, that of a culprit, was far from displeasing to the poet, who, moreover, was delighted at the trick played upon his "dear director."

"Jack," he said, in conclusion, "man must be serious, must work. Life is not a romance. I ask nothing better than to be convinced that you are really repentant. Listen, then, to what I have to propose. From the time which I devote to my terrible artistic struggles I will give daily an hour or two to your education and instruction. If you will work, I undertake to make of you, undisciplined and frivolous child though you are, a man like myself, solidly equipped for the battle of life."

"You hear, Jack," said the mother, uneasy at the child's silence, "you understand, do you not, the great sacrifice our friend is about to make for your sake?"

"Yes, mamma," murmured Jack.

"Wait, Charlotte," d'Argenton replied, "I must first know whether my proposition pleases him. There is no compulsion, you understand."

"Well, Jack?"

Jack, much perplexed at hearing his mother addressed as Charlotte, scarcely knew how to reply, and was so long in seeking words eloquent and touching enough to reward such generosity, that his gratitude subsided into complete silence. On seeing this, his mother pushed him into the arms of the poet, who gave him a genuine stage-kiss, making up in sound for what it lacked in warmth; at the same time the poet did not entirely conceal the involuntary repugnance he felt.

"Oh, my dear, how noble, how good you are!" murmured the poor woman, while the child, dismissed with a gesture, ran downstairs as fast as he could to hide his emotion.

In fact, Jack's arrival was somewhat of a relief to the poet; after the first pleasure of getting settled had passed, he soon wearied of his tête-à-tête with Ida, whom he now called Charlotte, in memory of Goethe's heroine, and because he desired to obliterate every reminder of the former Ida de Barancy. But when he was with her, he still felt himself alone, so completely had his masterful personality impressed itself upon the narrow mind and negative nature of this unfortunate creature.

She repeated his words, absorbed his ideas, diluting his paradoxes with interminable twaddle, so that the two were really one, and this oneness which under certain conditions may seem the ideal of happiness, had become a source of actual torment to d'Argenton, who was too combative,

argumentative, too fond of controversy, to rest content with eternal approbation.

Now at least he would have some one to thwart, domineer over, lecture and reprimand, for he was more of a pedagogue than poet, and this was to be seen in the portentous flourish with which he entered upon his arrangements for Jack's education, with the pompous exactitude, the methodical solemnity that characterized the least action of this dogmatic, everlasting sermonizer.

The very next morning, on awaking in his little chamber, Jack saw, fastened to the groove of his mirror, and written in the poet's faultless hand-writing, a placard on which he read in big letters:

"RULES."

It was life reduced to a syllabus, a plan of studies, the entire day divided into a formidable number of little compartments overflowing with occupations, such as these: "*At six o'clock, arise. From six to seven, breakfast. Seven to eight, lessons. From eight to nine* ——" and so on.

Days laid out by rule in this fashion resemble closed windows where the blinds allow just enough of air to breathe, a gleam of daylight to pass through their narrow and regular crevices. Generally such rules are made merely to be broken, but d'Argenton's punctilious severity permitted not the slightest negligence. And besides this, he had that mania for system which was naturally to be expected from a former professor of the Gymnase Moronval.

D'Argenton's system consisted in pounding into the head of a beginner a heterogeneous mass of knowledge, Latin, Greek, German, algebra, geometry, anatomy, and syntax, with certain other indispensable rudiments. After that nature was to sort out, arrange, and classify this farrago of learning.

The system may have been excellent, but, either because it was too vast for the child's intelligence to grasp, or because the professor lacked ability to apply his theories, Jack received no benefit from them. He was indeed, somewhat advanced for his age, and in spite of his desultory education, more intelligent than the average child of eleven years, but the confusion and chaos of those first years of school-life were only heightened by the aggregation of studies his new master presented to him. Moreover, that imposing personage inspired him with fear, and above all, Nature herself stirred his pulses, and at last completely absorbed him.

Suddenly transported from the mouldy little courtyard of the Gymnase Moronval, from that dreadful Passage des Douze Maisons to the open country, he was carried away, enthralled by the vision of Nature and her perpetual contacts.

When, in the loveliest time of the whole afternoon, he found himself in the turret, face to face with the professor and his books, and had to bury himself in a big copy-book, while the lines danced before his eyes, he was seized with an uncontrollable longing to escape, to play truant, throwing all those rules to the wind.

Through the open windows, May, all a-bloom, wafted her perfume, the forest spread out its green undulations, and Jack forgot his lesson to follow flocks of birds in the branches or the bushy tail of some squirrel scampering through the sombre leafage of a walnut tree. What torture to decline "*Rosa*, the rose" in several languages, while on the edge of the wood, within reach of his hands, gleamed the pale fresh petals of the wild rose.

Oh to be outdoors, in the sunshine! He could think of nothing else.

"The child is an idiot!" d'Argenton exclaimed, when to all his questions and arguments Jack replied in a dazed fashion, as if, in order to answer, he had dropped from the tree-tops he had been watching, or from some light cloud moving towards the setting sun. His tall figure, for he was overgrown for his years, made him look still more absurd, and all the poet's severity had no effect, except to confuse more hopelessly the impotent efforts of his overcrowded memory.

At the end of a month, d'Argenton declared that he gave it up, that it was a hopeless task, and a pure waste of the precious moments which should be devoted to serious occupations. In fact he was not at all sorry to escape, himself, from the many exigencies of that iron régime which had hampered and imprisoned him as well as the child. For her part, Ida, or, to be more exact, Charlotte, accepted very readily the idea that Jack was an ignoramus, too dull to be taught; she preferred to believe that rather than be a witness to the painful scenes,

rages, and outbursts of tears that were the outcome of this laborious education.

She loved peace above all things, and desired every one about her to be happy. Her ideas, as limited as her mind, never went beyond the needs of the present, and the future would have been dearly bought, if it had been purchased at the cost of her immediate tranquillity.

It will be readily believed that Jack was delighted when his eyes were no longer greeted with those implacable rules: "*At six, rise. Six to seven, breakfast. Seven to eight,*" etc. The days seemed longer, full of light and liberty. As he knew that he was not wanted in the house by his mother's manner when she kissed him, the tone of her voice when she spoke to Jack in His presence, he ran off for whole days, with that utter disregard for the passing of time so natural to children and idlers.

He had two dear friends, the keeper and the forest. At daybreak he would start off, reaching the little house of the Archambaulds just as the wife, before going to work for the "Parisians," gave her husband his breakfast in the neat, fresh little room, hung with light green paper, where a hundred times at least the same rabbit was seen escaping from the same huntsman lying in wait. Then they went out to the kennel, filled with dogs in training; they barked and yelped and bounded against the grating, waiting to be let out, — short noses, long, and broad, — hanging ears, and straight, and fringed, there was every variety. How they leaped and frisked, dispersing to every corner of the

courtyard in that first transport of joy and liberty, what natural grace in every movement, once they had escaped from the straw and common platter of the kennel! There were Danish dogs, spotted with yellow, such tractable, submissive creatures, and little squat terriers that rushed over the ground of which their agile little bodies seemed almost a part, wild, unkempt-looking *griffons*, shaking their long silky hair from their eyes at every movement, African *slouguis*, too tall, too magnificent for the chase, heraldic greyhounds, every sort of dog was to be seen there.

With great solemnity Father Archambauld exercised his pupils, using training collar and whip when they needed correction, with those severe glances that have such effect upon certain beasts that they are quite subdued, ready to cringe and crouch in fear and trembling. Jack thought sometimes at sight of a rebel, "Ah, that fellow cannot understand systems," and he longed to carry it off to the forest, to let it share in that joyous unconcern, that open-air life which lent himself such a superabundance of spirits.

He was so happy, was little Jack, so proud too, to accompany the keeper through the woods, tramp side by side with this formidable man, the terror of the neighboring country, who with his gun slung over his shoulder presented such a martial appearance. In that company he saw a unique aspect of the forest, populous and full of animation, an aspect not familiar to the unelect. Instead of those frightened rustlings among the

leaves, those stealthy movements in the grass, that are scared at the lightest tread, he witnessed the pleasing sight of beasts going freely about their business or pleasure. Now a hen-pheasant, escorted by her brood, picked among the ant-hills those whitish eggs big as pearls, piled at the foot of the trees; now a roebuck, nibbling the young shoots, would cross the forest-path with astonished gaze and timid step, yet more amused than afraid. Then, on the outskirts of the forest, would be seen the hares, rabbits, and partridges, starting off for the fields.

Behind the delicate screen formed by the young branches, among which the hawthorn in blossom showed its clusters of fragrant, white blossoms fit to deck an altar, a whole world of life was astir, creeping, running, mingling with the shadows of the tall tree-tops. The keeper examined the burrows, the coveys, destroyed all pests, — vipers, magpies, squirrels, moles and field-mice. He was paid so much a head or tail for every one of these destroyers, and twice a year he carried to Corbeil, to the office of the sous-préfet, a collection of these dried and powdery remains that he had gathered into his bag day by day. Ah! if he could have put in it also the head of every poacher and pilferer of the woods! He loved his trees more than his beasts, this Father Archambauld.

A roebuck can be replaced; for one dead pheasant, a thousand will be born each spring. But a tree takes long to grow.

And how he watched them, guarding them against the slightest disease. Among others, he had a whole colony of fir-trees, attacked by *bastrichs*, which fact rendered him miserable. These *bastrichs* are tiny worms that come no one knows whence, in millions, choosing the mightiest tree, the fairest and best, taking it by assault. To protect itself against these terrible invasions, the tree has only its resin, and with all its strength it tries to resist the enemy with the stream of its sap, but every flow costs part of the tree's life. It pours torrents of resin upon the *bastrich* and the eggs deposited in the fibres of its bark, but becomes dried up, worn out in this useless struggle. Jack became interested in the fate of these unfortunate trees as he saw them, during their combat, dropping that odorous sweat, those vegetable tears that crystallize into pure, translucent amber. Sometimes the fir tree seemed to escape that doom, but oftener it withered away, decayed, and then the giant whose kingship had been proclaimed by songs of birds and hum of bees, by the murmuring of all those existences it had sheltered and the chant of the wind through its strong branches, assumed the aspect of a tree struck by lightning, and at last fell, leaving up yonder among that host of tree-tops a blank, empty space.

The beech trees had another enemy, a species of red weevil that could scarcely be seen, and so strong in numbers that every leaf had its worm, which pricked it with a brilliant vermilion. From a distance that part of the forest, tinged as by a

premature autumn, the forerunner of death, wore a false glow of health, the brilliant but sickly flush that colors consumptive youth; old Archambauld watched these trees with mournful shakes of the head, like a doctor at sight of a patient whose life he despairs of saving.

During these tours of the forest, the keeper and the child seldom spoke, for the great symphony of the woods enthralled them. The music of the wind changed with every tree through which it passed, now a breath, now a sigh. It echoed through the pines like the surging of the sea; it quivered through the birches and aspens, a tremulous sound that left the branches motionless, but set the leaves vibrating in a thousand metallic notes; from the edge of the pools, quite numerous in that part of the forest, came sounds scarcely audible, the rustling of reeds inclining towards each other their long, shining, tapering arms. Above rose the shrill note of the magpie, the blows of the woodpecker's bill, the melancholy call of the cuckoo, all that vague music that stirs the forest for miles and miles. Those delightful sounds never left Jack's ears, and he loved them.

But in rambling through the forest with the keeper he had made enemies. On the borders of the forest lived not a few poachers, whose lives had been made miserable by Archambauld's vigilance, and whose unrelenting hatred he had won. Sly and cowardly, when they met him in the woods, they took off their caps, including the child in their greeting; but when they met the latter alone they

shook their fists at him. There was one old woman called Mother Salé with wrinkled features, the skin of an old squaw, red as a sand-quarry, and thin pursed-up lips; she pursued Jack even in his dreams.

When he left the keeper at sunset, to return to Les Aulnettes, he always came across this thieving old hag, loaded with stolen wood, and seated at the side of a ditch, reminding one of that fantastic Nicodemus in the moon pointed out to children, with its demon-like fire-clad outline crossing that luminous face. She awaited his appearance, without budging an inch, let him pass her, taking to his heels, then in a slow, vulgar voice and the ancient Île-de-France accent, she called out: "Come! you! where are you going so fast? I saw you! so now! Wait a bit and I'll sharpen your nose on my sickle."

Then she would get up, taking delight in frightening him, pretending to follow, her sickle upraised. Jack heard her hasty steps, her faggots dragging along the ground, and ran, reaching home panting and breathless. But these terrors merely added to the poetic charm of the forest, by lending the mysterious attraction of danger.

Returning from these tramps, Jack would find his mother in the kitchen, talking in a low voice to the keeper's wife. An oppressive silence filled the house, accented still more by the sonorous tick of the great dining-room clock. The child kissed his mother, and the latter with a motion of the hand would say:

"Hush. Don't speak. HE is upstairs. HE is at work!"

Jack would seat himself upon a chair in the corner, and would amuse himself by watching the cat warming its back in the sun, or the bust of the poet, its shadow lengthening majestically upon the lawn. With the awkwardness of a child that craves noise because he knows it is forbidden, he always upset something, moved the table, or jostled the weights of the clock in one of those unconscious idle movements that such exuberant small creatures must indulge in at every step.

"Can't you be quiet?" his mother would repeat, and old Mother Archambauld, setting the table, would take every sort of precaution, trying to walk tip-toe, although her big heavy feet had no tips, bending her broad back, hunching her shoulders, heavy and awkward in every movement, but zealous in her efforts not to disturb *Monsieur*, who was at work. Yes, he was working.

They could hear him above in the turret, with regular tread keeping time to his reverie or his *ennui*, rolling his chair or pushing his table. He had begun his *Daughter of Faust*, and all day long he shut himself up with that title, which he had chosen quite accidentally, though not a single line thus far had justified the choice. And yet he now possessed all that had been the object of his dreams, leisure, the solitude of the country, and a charming study. When he wearied of the forest, of the green reflections that came to him through the panes, he had but to turn his chair, and he

found himself face to face with a varied, illimitable expanse of blue water and sky, melting away in the distance.

The aroma of the woods, the freshness of the river, were borne upward to him; the sweep of the wind through the trees, the faint murmuring of water and air emphasized this great calm of nature and enlarged his horizon. There was nothing to disturb or to distract him, and overhead no sound save the cooing of pigeons, a "*rrrouou*" as soft as their swelling, many-tinted throats.

"Ah, what a delightful place, this, — for work!" the poet exclaimed.

And then he would seize his pen, and open his inkstand. But nothing came to him, not so much as a line. The paper remained white, as devoid of words as his thought; the chapter heads designated in advance, for a mania for titles pursued him relentlessly, lay about like the numbered stakes in a field forgotten by the sower. He was surrounded by too much comfort, too much poetry. He was smothered beneath a superabundance of the ideal, by too much worldly prosperity.

Just to think of it! Here he was in a Louis XV pavilion on the edge of the forest, in that lovely town of Étiolles bound inseparably to the memory of La Pompadour by yards of pink ribbon, and diamond clasps! He had all that is needed in order to become a poet, a great poet — an adored and charming mistress with whom the romantic name of Charlotte harmonized so well, a Henri II chair, so favorable for severe concentration of

thought — a little white goat called Dalti that followed him about on his walks, and to tell the hours of those happy days, an old enamelled clock, whose soft, deep chime seemed an echo of the past, evoking the melancholy shades of vanished days!

It was too much, far too much! and the unhappy rhymester felt as sterile, as devoid of inspiration as when, after a whole day passed in giving lessons, he shut himself up in his garret at night.

Oh! those long, long hours spent in smoking, lounging about on the divan, staring through the windows, weary and bored!

When Charlotte's step was heard upon the stairway he seated himself quickly at the table, with an absorbed, irritated countenance, his eyes fixed in an expressionless stare that possibly was induced by reverie.

"Enter!" he called, in answer to a timid knock at the door.

And she entered, her beautiful arms bared, her sleeves gathered up, looking so very rustic that the powder on her face might have been the flour scattered by some comic-opera windmill.

"I have come to look at my poet," she said, on entering.

But she always pronounced it "pouâte," which set the nerves of her poet on edge.

"Well, how is it progressing? Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied! As if in this terrible profession of letters, with its perpetual strain upon the intellect, one could ever be satisfied!"

He was transported with indignation, and his voice grew ironic.

"I understand, my dear. I merely wished to learn whether your *Daughter of Faust* —"

"Well, what? My *Daughter of Faust!* Do you know how many years Goethe needed for his *Faust* — Goethe himself? Ten years! And yet he lived in an artistic atmosphere, in an intellectual environment. He was not condemned, as I am, to that solitude of thought, which is the worst of all solitudes, which leads to inactivity, mere contemplation, the effacement of every idea."

The poor woman dared not reply. Through the frequent repetition of certain pet phrases of d'Argenton's she had come to understand the full reproach they were intended to convey. The poet's tone said: "You, poor fool, are not the one to compensate me for the loss of those surroundings my genius demands, that contact of mind with mind that enlivens with sparkling flashes of wit." The fact was, he found her stupid, and felt as bored in her company as when he was alone.

Although he did not realize it, what had attracted him towards this woman was the frame of the picture, the admiration, the wealth that surrounded her, that apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann, with its carriage and servants, the jealousy of the other Failures at his possession of such a mistress! But now that she was his, and he had her all to himself, and had transformed her, baptized her anew, she had lost half her charm for him. And

yet she was very pretty, and the country air, which suited the exuberance of her charms, had certainly added to them. But what benefit did he derive from having a pretty mistress when no one saw her pass on his arm? And besides, what did she care about poetry? She loved far better the talk of some village-gossip; had not a single one of those qualities that could have helped this impotent poet to mount to the skies, or divert him from the utter weariness and monotonous dulness in which solitude and idleness had plunged him.

What a sight it was to see him every morning awaiting the postman's coming, the arrival of those three or four papers to which he subscribed, and whose many-colored wrappers he tore off as impatiently as though he expected to find in the columns some news of himself, perhaps a criticism of that play that had never seen the daylight, the book that lived only in his brain. He read these papers without skipping a single line, not even the printer's name. Invariably they gave him some cause for displeasure, and were the subject of interminable and commonplace conversations at the breakfast-table.

Every one else had a chance! Their plays were performed, and such plays! Their books were printed, and such books too! But for himself nothing, nothing was accepted. And the worst of it was that the very subjects he had chosen seemed to be "in the air," every one could get hold of them, carry them off, so that those whose work got into print first destroyed the field for

the others. There was scarcely a week that some one did not steal some idea of his.

"What do you think, Charlotte? They played a new comedy of Émile Augier's at the Théâtre Français. And it is nothing in the world but my *Atalanta's Apples!*"

"Oh, but that is infamous! Stolen your *Atalanta's Apples!* I 'll write myself to that Laugier," said poor Lolotte, thoroughly indignant.

And he, very bitterly: "Ah! that 's always the way when one is not on the spot; every one usurps his place."

He uttered this as though she were in some sort to blame, forgetting that a little corner in the country had been the dream of his life. The injustice of the public, the corruption of the critic, he discussed these with all the animosity of impotent natures, formulating his views in cold, pedantic phrases.

During these ill-natured repasts Jack spoke not a word, kept as still as though he hoped to escape notice and avoid bringing down upon himself any part of the general ill-humor. But as d'Argenton grew more and more irritable, his secret antipathy for the child would assert itself, and the shaking of his hands as he filled the boy's glass, the frowning glances he bestowed in that direction, warned little Jack that his hatred would require a very slight cause to break forth.

IX.

BÉLISAIRE'S FIRST APPEARANCE.

ONE afternoon when d'Argenton and Charlotte had gone to Corbeil, moved by that longing for change of scene which pursues all idle people, Jack, left alone with Mother Archambauld, had been obliged to give up his ramble in the forest because a heavy storm was threatening. The sky, a real July sky, darkened by heavy vapors, showed copper-color upon the edges of the great black cloud-banks, through which ran dull rumblings. And the valley, completely darkened over one point, silent and deserted, wore the motionless, expectant aspect with which the earth seems to anticipate some atmospheric disturbance.

The child did not know what to do with himself, and at last the keeper's wife, tired of having him at her heels, looked at the sky and said to Jack:

"Come, Master Jack; it is not raining yet; before the shower begins it would be very nice of you to go as far as the road, and bring me some grass for the rabbits."

Delighted to be of use, the child took a basket and hurried along the road from Les Aulnettes till he reached the Corbeil road, a little below, and set to work, hunting along the slope of the

ditches for flowering wild thyme and the little weeds rabbits like to nibble.

The highway stretched out into the distance, whitened by a velvety fine burning dust that tinged the thick foliage of the elm-trees and the edge of the wood with a dull grey. The road was deserted, not a vehicle nor a passer-by in sight. The solitude made it look broader than it was. Jack at the bottom of the ditch, urged on in his search by the rumbling of the approaching storm, heard suddenly and close at hand a shrill, monotonous voice crying:

"Hats to sell! Hats to sell!" and afterwards in a deeper voice, "Panamas! panamas! panamas!"

It was one of those peddlers who scour the country carrying their wares on their backs.

This one bore upon his shoulders, like a hand-organ, a large basket filled with coarse straw hats, piled up high. He walked painfully and slowly, was bow-legged, his broad crooked feet shod with big yellow shoes, and he had the air of one who is suffering from a wound.

Have you ever thought how pathetic is such a figure, tramping along the highroad?

No one knows whither the wanderer is bound, whether chance will provide him with shelter for the night, a barn somewhere, a corner in which to lay his head. He seems to drag along with him the weariness of the road he has travelled, the uncertainty of the untrodden distance he is entering upon. For the peasant this wayfarer is a

stranger, an adventurer, to be followed with a suspicious glance, an eye that goes with him till the village is reached, reassured when the main-road guarded by honest gendarmes, has captured the stranger, who surely must be some malefactor.

"Hats, hats to sell!"

Why did the poor wretch keep up that cry? There was not a house in sight. Did he call for the benefit of those motionless milestones, for the birds hidden in the foliage of the elms, anxious and fearful, at the approach of the storm?

Even while he was calling his wares, he seated himself upon a heap of stones and wiped his forehead with his sleeve; Jack, from the other side of the road looked at that villainous, sad, grimy face; the man's age was uncertain, his eyes hollow and blinking, his thick shapeless mouth covered with a yellowish beard which did not hide his pointed teeth, set wide apart like those of a wolf. But what was most striking in that physiognomy was the strong expression of suffering, the mute plaint of those dull eyes, that heavy mouth, of all that monstrous unfinished face that seemed like a rediscovered specimen of a prehistoric age. The poor creature was doubtless conscious of his terrible ugliness, for when he saw the child eying him uneasily, he smiled quite amiably; this smile made him even uglier than before, for it started, at the corner of his mouth and eyes, innumerable tiny creases, all those lines to which a smile gives birth upon stunted faces, wrinkling instead of relaxing the features. But he looked so good-natured

when he smiled that Jack felt reassured then and there, and continued to pluck his weeds.

Suddenly a peal of thunder close at hand shook the heavens and the entire valley. A shudder ran along the road, raising the dust, and quivering through the trees.

The man rose and looked anxiously at the clouds, then he turned towards the child, who had also started up at the peal of thunder, and asked him whether it was far to the village.

"About a quarter of an hour's walk," the boy replied.

"Oh, good Lord, I can never get there before the rain," answered the poor hawker, "and my hats will be soaked through. I took too many, and this cloth is not big enough to cover them all."

Jack was moved to pity at the man's consternation; that famous journey of his had taught him to feel for all wanderers upon the highway.

"Here, peddler, peddler!" he called out to the man, who was already limping away, exerting his strength to the utmost, but unsuccessfully, for his legs were as twisted as vine-stocks. "Our house is near by, and if you want to, you may shelter your hats in it."

The poor fellow accepted the invitation eagerly. His summer merchandise was so delicate!

Both hurried off together along the road, clambering up the stony path to escape the storm which was close at their heels. The man went as fast as he could, making prodigious efforts, walk-

ing upon the sides of his shoes, and raising his feet at each step as if the pebbles had been fire.

"Does anything hurt you?" asked Jack.

"Oh yes, my shoes! You see, my feet are so big that I can find nothing to fit them. It hurts, I can tell you, to walk. If ever I am rich, I will have a pair of shoes made to measure, just for myself."

And he went on, sweating, groaning, hobbling over the uneven road, through force of habit uttering from time to time his mournful cry: "Hats, hats to sell."

They reached Les Aulnettes. The peddler deposited his huge pile of round hats in the entry, and remained humbly waiting there. But Jack insisted he should come into the dining-room.

"Come, my good man, step in. You must have a glass of wine, and something to eat."

The other did not wish to accept of this hospitality. At last he became resigned and said with his good-natured grin:

"Well, well, my little master! I had a crust awhile ago, and you know when one has just begun to eat he is always hungriest."

Mother Archambauld, who in her twofold capacity of peasant and keeper's wife, had a pious horror of tramps, made a wry face; nevertheless, she placed upon the table a great piece of bread and a big mug of wine.

"There! now bring a slice of ham," Jack commanded in a determined voice.

"But you know very well that Monsieur does

not allow any one to touch that ham," Mother Archambauld grumbled. The poet was a great glutton, and there were always in the cupboard little delicacies reserved specially for himself.

"Yes, that's so, but get it this time," said little Jack, who was quite pleased for once to play at being master of the house. The worthy woman obeyed, but she withdrew solemnly into the kitchen by way of protest.

Still thanking the boy, the man ate with a hearty appetite. The child poured him some wine, and watched him cut his bread in long slices which he crammed into his mouth sideways, to get them in.

"Tastes good, does n't it?"

"Oh yes, very good."

Without, the storm rumbled, the rain beat against the panes; but the man and the child talked together, enjoying the comfortable sensation that shelter imparts. The peddler informed Jack that his name was Bélisaire, and that he was the eldest of a numerous family, they lived in the Rue des Juifs, Paris — himself, his father, three brothers, and four sisters. They all made straw hats for summer, and caps for winter wear, and when the goods were ready, they set out to sell them, some tramping through the city, the others scouring the country.

"Do you go very far?" asked Jack.

"As far as Nantes, where one of my sisters lives. I go through Touraine and Anjou, by Montargis and Orleans."

"But you must get very tired; it hurts you so to walk."

"Yes, that's true; the only ease I have is at night, when I take off those wretched shoes; and my pleasure then is quite spoiled by the thought that I shall have to put them on again."

"But why don't your brothers go in your place?"

"They are too young, and then old Papa Bélisaire would never consent to being parted from them. It would break his heart. For myself, it does not matter."

He seemed to consider it quite natural that his brothers should be loved more than himself. He added, as he eyed his big yellow shoes ruefully, where the deformities of his cramped feet were marked by swellings and lumps and knobs:

"If I could only have a pair made to order!"

The storm grew more furious. Rain, wind, and thunder made a terrific noise. No one could hear himself speak and Bélisaire continued his meal in silence, when a loud knock at the door, repeated in great haste, made little Jack grow pale.

"Oh, heavens," he said, "here they are!"

D'Argenton had returned with Charlotte. They had intended to stay until nightfall, but fear of the storm, which they had hoped to forestall if they hurried, had hastened their return. They had been caught in the worst of it. The poet was in a terrible temper, tormented by the thought that he might have taken cold.

"Quick, quick, Lolotte! A fire in the dining-room!"

"Yes, love."

But while they shook themselves, for they were dripping, while they spread out their umbrellas to dry upon the stone floor of the hall-way, the amazed d'Argenton caught sight of a formidable pile of straw hats.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

Oh, if Jack could have fallen through the earth a hundred feet with that strange guest of his and the table all spread! But there would scarcely have been time, for the poet entered the room, glanced frigidly around, and took in the whole situation. The child stammered out a few words of explanation and excuse, but the other did not listen to them.

"Charlotte, just come and look! You did not tell me that Monsieur Jack was to hold a reception to-day. Monsieur has company! Monsieur entertains his guests."

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" murmured the mother reproachfully.

"Don't blame him, madame," Bélisaire tried to interpose, "it's my fault — I —"

D'Argenton, furious, opened the door and pointing the poor wretch the way out, said with a majestic gesture:

"*You!* do me the favor to hold your tongue and be off with you as fast as you can, you vagabond, or I'll have you locked up, to teach you how to enter people's houses."

Bélisaire, whose trade had accustomed him to every sort of humiliation, made no reply, caught up his basket in haste, looked sadly towards the dripping windows, and directed a glance full of gratitude towards little Jack, bending sideways to make a humble, very humble salute, and still continued to stoop even after he had crossed the threshold, splashed by the pelting rain which descended upon the panamas with a sound like hail. Once outside, he did not attempt to walk erect. They saw him go off, his back bent to all the cruel blows of chance, all the fury of the elements, and in a mournful voice he cried mechanically:

"Hats, hats to sell!"

There was a moment's silence in the dining-room, while the keeper's wife started a fire of twigs in the big chimney-place, and Charlotte busied herself drying her poet's clothes, while he paced back and forth in his shirt-sleeves, dignified and solemn, but a prey to the worst of humors.

Suddenly as he passed in front of the table, he caught sight of the ham, his leg of ham, in which the peddler's knife, guided by the ferocity of his appetite, had made such deep gashes, great gaping holes like those caverns hollowed out by the sea at high tide, whose farthermost limit no eye can measure.

His face grew ghastly.

For remember that this leg of ham was sacred to his use, as sacred as the poet's wine, his mustard-pot, or his mineral-water.

"Oh, ho! I did not see that before! A perfect feast, it seems. So they did not leave even the ham?"

"What, did they touch the ham?" asked Charlotte, rising indignantly, astounded at such audacity.

The keeper's wife put in: "Well, I said Monsieur would be angry to have such a fine piece of pig thrown away on such a beggar. But then how should he know any better? He is so young!"

Jack, now that the first charitable impulse had passed, and he was no longer under the spell of that wrinkled smile, oh that beautiful, sad smile! —was himself overwhelmed at his own daring. At last, trembling and excited, he stammered:

"Forgive me."

"Oh yes, I'll forgive you!"

Wounded in his pride and his gluttony, d'Argenton unburdened himself all at once of the irritability, the annoyance, the hatred, inspired in him by this child, this part of the mysterious past that lived as if in accusation of the woman whom he loved a little, though he esteemed her not in the least.

He had — which rarely happened with him — a sudden access of rage, seized Jack by the arm, shook his long adolescent body, and lifted him from the floor, as if to show him how weak he was.

"Who told you you might touch that ham? What right had you? You knew quite well it

did not belong to you. Once for all, nothing here belongs to you. The bed in which you sleep, the bread you eat, are furnished by my bounty, my kindness. And I was mistaken to show you charity at all. For after all, what do I know of your antecedents? Who are you? Where do you come from? There are moments when the precocious depravity of your instincts terrifies me as to your origin."

He was stopped short by an imploring sign from Charlotte, calling his attention to Mother Archambauld who was watching them both, her black, listening eyes full of curiosity. In the village they were supposed to be man and wife, and Jack passed for the son of Madame d'Argenton by a previous marriage.

Compelled to pause, to restrain the stream of abuse that almost choked him, d'Argenton, exasperated, grotesque, soaked and steaming like an omnibus-horse, hurried upstairs to his chamber, banging the door behind him. Jack remained with his mother, much dismayed at her despair; she wrung her beautiful hands, and as on a previous occasion, asked God what she had done to deserve such an existence. This was her only resource in the complications of her life, and invariably the question remained unanswered, but it is to be feared she must have committed some very serious faults, since God could condemn her to remain the blind, obtusely devoted companion of such a creature as this.

To add the last touch to the black and sullen

humor of her poet, ill-health was added to his ennui and the dreariness of his solitude. Like all who have led a life of privation, d'Argenton had a delicate stomach; a weakling, and always complaining, he nursed his least ailment, and in the deep quiet that prevailed at Les Aulnettes, nothing was easier. What an admirable excuse for the sterility of his brain, the long naps upon the divan, that listlessness that overpowered him. Henceforth the famous "He is at work, Monsieur is at work," was replaced by "Monsieur has one of his attacks." For in this vague fashion he christened an intermittent indisposition which never hindered his visiting the bread-box many times a day, and cutting great pieces of fresh bread which he covered thickly with cream cheese, and ate greedily, his moustaches somewhat the worse for it. Except for his appetite, he had every symptom of invalidism, a languid walk, a bad temper, and an endlessly exacting disposition.

The amiable Charlotte pitied him, petted him, and waited upon him incessantly. That sister of charity in the heart of every woman was in her case combined with an imbecile sentimentality, that made her poet still dearer to her because she believed him to be ill. What contrivances for diverting him and alleviating his sufferings! She laid a woollen covering under the tablecloth to deaden the clatter of plates and silver, she had an arrangement of cushions with which she padded the back of the Henri II chair, a host of little

attentions, flannel, infusions, and all that coddling which deadens the energy of voluntary invalids, and weakens even the sound of the voice.

It is true that the poor woman, with that irrepressible, exuberant gaiety of hers, sometimes undid with one unhappy stroke, all the virtues of her nursing, indulging in some superfluous efflorescence of speech or gesture, checking herself much confused, at sight of her poet's irritation, and his dolorous "Be still — you weary me!"

This illness of d'Argenton's attracted to the house a constant visitor, Doctor Rivals, who was watched for at every corner of the road, for his clientèle was large, and scattered over thirty miles of country, absorbing every moment of his time. That red, blotchy, good-natured face, with its white silky, curly, shock of hair, would appear in the doorway, the pockets of his long coat crammed with old books which he always read on the way, whether in his carriage or on foot. Charlotte affected an air of great dignity as she met him in the entry, exclaiming:

"Oh, Doctor, make haste. If you knew what a condition our poor poet is in!"

"Bah, don't be disturbed about him. All he needs is to be amused." And in fact d'Argenton, who greeted the doctor in a weak and woebegone voice, was so glad at sight of a new face, at contact with anything that could introduce some slight element of variety into his monotonous existence that he forgot his illness, talked politics and literature, dazzling the worthy doctor

with tales of Parisian life, of noted people he professed to have known, and to whom he had said "these cruel words." The doctor, who was very frank and simple-minded, had no reason to doubt the glacial narrative of the patient, who, even in the most extravagant flights of his vanity, always seemed to measure every phrase; moreover old Rivals was not observing.

He was pleased with the household, found the poet intelligent, original, the woman charming, the child delightful, and never once suspected, as a keener intellect would have discovered, by what chance threads these people were bound, how insecurely fastened were the pins that held them together as a family, and how sorely they pricked.

Often towards noon, his horse's bridle attached to a ring of the fence, the good man lingered with the Parisians, sipping the grog Charlotte had prepared him with her own hands, and telling the tale of his voyages to Indo-China, aboard the *Bayonnaise.* Jack sat in a corner, a silent and attentive listener, stirred by that passion for adventure that belongs to childhood, which later life, alas! so soon crushes out, with its monotonous levelling and narrowing of youth's horizon.

"Jack," d'Argenton would say, with brutal abruptness, pointing towards the door, but the doctor interposed:

"Let him alone. It is so pleasant to have the little ones about. They are so sharp, these small rascals. I am quite sure yours has guessed, just

from looking at me that I love children to distraction, and am a grandpapa myself."

Then he told them about his grandchild, Cécile, who was two years younger than Jack, and once started upon the subject of Cécile's perfections, he was even more talkative than when relating his voyages.

"Why do you not bring her to see us, Doctor?" said Charlotte, "the two children would enjoy playing together."

"Oh, no, madame. Her grandmother would not permit that. She never trusts the child to any one, and she herself goes nowhere since our misfortune."

The misfortune to which Rivals often referred, was the loss of his daughter and her husband, the death of both occurring in the year of their marriage, shortly after the birth of Cécile. A mystery surrounded this twofold catastrophe. With the d'Argentons, the doctor's confidence was always limited to these words, "since our misfortune," and Mother Archambauld who was acquainted with the story referred to it only in the vaguest phrases.

"Oh yes, indeed! Those are people who have had real trouble in their day."

But it scarcely appeared in the gaiety and animation of the doctor when he visited Les Aulnettes. That grog of Charlotte's may perhaps have had something to do with it, for it was a stiff mixture, which Madame Rivals had she seen it, would have hastened to weaken with a good deal of water.

Whatever was the cause, time passed quickly for the good man in the society of these Parisians, and after rising several times to say "I am going to Ris, to Tigery, or Morsang," he would continue the conversation until the pawing of his horse, which had grown impatient, waiting at the gate, made him hurry away, with a good-day to the poet, and to Charlotte a prescription that never varies: "Give him plenty of amusement."

Amusement!

Where and how should she procure it for him? She was at her wits' end. They passed whole hours arranging for their meals. They set off for a drive to the forest, carrying their breakfast, a butterfly-net, and piles of papers and books, and still he was bored.

He bought a boat, but that made matters only worse, because of that tête-à-tête upon the Seine, which imposed an arbitrary constraint upon both until at length it became insupportable to the pair, who threw their lines to find something to occupy them, employing the silence necessary in fishing as an excuse, a pretext for the perpetual dumbness that possessed them. It was not long before the boat was left among the rushes of the river, filled with water and dead leaves.

After that, all sorts of fantastic projects occurred to him, alterations had to be made in the wall, the turret; an outer staircase was constructed, and also an Italian terrace, which had always been a dream of the poet's; this was followed by a row of low pillars, with a trellis garlanded with Virginia

creepers, and still he was bored in spite of his terrace.

One day when a tuner was in the house, putting in order the piano upon which the poet was able to play a few polkas, the former, who had a turn for eccentric inventions, proposed to d'Argenton to put upon the roof an Æolian harp, a great lidless box, five feet high, whose unequal strings vibrated in the wind, with plaintive and harmonious chords. D'Argenton was enthusiastic over the idea. Scarcely was the apparatus set up, than the effect was dismal indeed. At the slightest breath of air, groans and agonizing modulations, lamentable shrieks were heard — *houoûou!* Jack hid his head under the blanket at the sounds, seized with a terrible fear. That accursed and melancholy thing overhead on the roof was enough to drive one mad.

"That harp will be the death of me — no more of it," cried the exasperated poet.

They took down the mechanism, they carried that Æolian harp to the end of the garden, and buried it, hoping to bury the sound of its vibrations. But even underground it continued to make music. At last they smashed its strings, demolished it with blows and stones as though it had been some ferocious wild beast that would not die.

Not knowing what to do to distract this unfortunate, whose inactivity was fast developing into mania, a generous and noble thought occurred to Charlotte. "How would it do to invite some of his friends to see him?"

This was a genuine sacrifice on her part, for she would have liked to keep him to herself, for herself alone; but the poet's delight, when she told him Labassindre and Dr. Hirsch were coming to see him, quite recompensed her for her courage. For a long time his thoughts had been harping upon some diversion from the outer world, but he had not dared to speak of it after all his declamations concerning the happiness of solitude and of a life shared with one companion. Some days after this, Jack returning in time for dinner, heard before he entered the house, most unusual sounds, the clink of glasses issuing from the new terrace, the clatter of saucepans, and the breaking of wood for a fire in the big kitchen on the ground floor. As he came nearer, he recognized the voices, the eccentricities of his old-time professors of the Gymnase, and mingling with theirs, d'Argenton's voice, no longer listless and whining as usual, enlivened by the amenities of a discussion. The child was terrified at the thought of finding himself face to face again with those creatures who recalled to him the memory of so many unhappy hours, and trembling, he slid away into the garden to await dinner.

"Gentlemen, dinner — when you are ready!" Charlotte announced, appearing upon the terrace, fresh and full of animation, having donned for the occasion a big white apron whose bib reached almost to her chin, with the air of the hospitable housewife who when necessity calls, knows how to roll up her lace-trimmed sleeves and lend a hand in the making of a pâté.

All hastened to the dining-room, where the two professors were sufficiently amiable in their greeting of Jack, and they all seated themselves at table to partake of one of those delicious rural repasts, which, served up fresh and steaming from the kitchen, seem to retain the savor of wild herbs and all the aroma of the soup-pot.

The two doors opening upon the lawn disclosed a view of the garden, which lost itself in a seemingly endless stretch of woodland. The call of partridges, the twitter of birds going to sleep reached the ears of the guests just as the last flaming rays of the sun fell slantingly through the window-panes.

"Hang it, but you are comfortable here, my children," Labassindre remarked suddenly, when the soup had been swallowed with great gusto, and each one felt at liberty to think again.

"Yes, we are very happy," said d'Argenton, pressing Charlotte's hand, for she seemed very pretty and seductive and quite another person since others could contemplate her charms beside himself; he gave a description of the happy life they led.

He told of those walks in the forest, their boating with halts at old riverside inns, venerable tow-houses with an inner railing of wrought iron, and two big, rusty tow-rings set in the stonework of the façade. And then the long, still, summer afternoons spent in work, and those evenings spent together by the fireside in the autumn, when the nights begin to grow chilly, and the fire on the

hearth flames and leaps high, fed by roots and stumps.

He spoke as he felt at the moment, and she too imagined that she had led that ideal life during those days both had found so painfully slow, so mortally dull. The others listened with an indescribable grimace of admiration, envy, and pleasure, but there was something bitter and forced about their smile, the mouth twisted by convulsive spite.

"Ah, a lucky dog you are," said Labassindre. "Just to think that to-morrow at this very hour, you will be dining here in this place, and I shall be sitting in some stuffy little restaurant where the very air one breathes, the windows covered with steam, the portion of food brought one, smell of steam and heat and stew."

"If one were even sure of dining there every day," grumbled Dr. Hirsch.

A sudden impulse seized d'Argenton.

"Well now, what need hinder you from staying here a while? The house is large, the cellar well stocked."

"Why, yes!" said Charlotte, eagerly, "that would be charming. We will make excursions."

"But the opera?" asked Labassindre, who rehearsed every day.

"But you, Monsieur Hirsch, you do not play at the opera?"

"Upon my soul, Comtesse, I am strongly tempted to accept your invitation. I have really little on hand just at present, for my patients are away in the country."

Dr. Hirsch's patients away in the country! There was something really humorous in that! But no one was tempted to smile, for among the Failures such flights of the imagination are quite pardonable.

"Come, make up your mind," said d'Argenton. "And remember you will be doing me a service. In my present state of health, you could aid me with your advice."

"That settles it at once. For you know what I have already told you, Rivals does not understand your case. In a month, I answer for it, I shall have you on your legs again."

"Yes, but what about the Gymnase? and Moronval?" exclaimed Labassindre, furious to think the other should enjoy a pleasure he could not share.

"They can go to perdition for all I care. I've had enough of the Gymnase and of Moronval and of the Decostère method."

And Dr. Hirsch, assured of food and lodging for some time to come, burst into a torrent of complaints and abuse against the institution which had kept him from starvation; Moronval was nothing but a hack, he had n't a cent left to his name, and in fact every one was leaving him. That affair of Mâdou's had been a bad business, and had done him no small amount of damage.

The others enlarged willingly upon this theme and a veritable slaughter of the Moronvals' reputations ensued. They went so far as to compliment Jack upon his escapade, which, it appeared,

had worked the mulatto into such an attack of bilious rage that he had suffered from jaundice ever since.

Once launched upon this theme, so familiar to them all, the three friends talked on, and the entire evening was spent in "breaking sugar" — this was their slang phrase for conversations of this sort.

Labassindre's "sugar" was broken upon the heads of the leading singers at the Opera, who were mere strolling players, nothing more. They could strike attitudes, but could they act or sing? The manager came in for his share too, a man who deliberately kept him wasting his time upon secondary roles. And why? Because it was known that he was a socialist, that he had once been a working man, that he sprang from the people and loved them.

"Yes, I admit I love the People!" said the singer, excitedly bringing his fist down upon the table with a loud whack. "And if I do? What business is it of theirs? Did that ever hinder me from giving my note. And I think it is there still! Listen to that, boys!" — and he essayed his note, caressingly, — gargling it in his throat with delight.

And now it was d'Argenton's turn. He broke his sugar methodically, coldly, with dry, relentless little blows aimed at every one. Theatrical managers, publishers, authors, the public at large, no one was forgotten. And while Charlotte, aided by little Jack, attended to making the coffee, the

three spent that lovely summer evening slavering voluptuously as boas to aid digestion.

The appearance of Dr. Rivals added to the animation of this symposium. Delighted to find a gay company, the worthy man accepted a place at table.

"Now, you see, Madame d'Argenton, all our patient requires is to be amused."

Dr. Hirsch's eyes glared behind his convex spectacles. "I do not agree with you, Doctor," he said very bluntly, leaning his chin in his hand, ready to give battle.

Old Rivals regarded, not without amazement, that singular greasy looking personage, closely shaven, a white cravat around his neck, his left eye almost sightless except in one little corner, so that to place his interlocutor in range of his visual ray, he was obliged to sit sidewise, and speak in profile.

"Is the gentleman a doctor?" asked Rivals.

D'Argenton spared his friend the trouble of lying.

"Dr. Hirsch, Dr. Rivals," he said, introducing the pair.

They bowed like two adversaries, about to engage in a duel, their glances crossing before their swords. The worthy Rivals, fancying he had to do with some famous practitioner from Paris, some original genius, assumed a modest attitude at first, but soon perceiving the disordered state of that cracked brain, began to reply to the disdainful persiflage of the other, his voice grow-

ing louder and louder, for Dr. Hirsch was beginning to rouse his ire, no difficult matter.

"My dear colleague, permit me to observe — "

"Pardon me, my dear colleague —"

A scene ensued that might have been handed down from Molière himself, Latin and gibberish included, with this difference that in Molière's day such a type of nondescript as Dr. Hirsch did not exist, requiring for his evolution our nineteenth century, over-heated, unsettled, overstocked with ideas.

D'Argenton's illness was the subject of their discussion, and it was curious to note the really comical expression on the face of the poet, who, on the one hand, considered that Dr. Rivals treated him too much as one whose illness was only imaginary, but on the other hand, could not help making a wry face at the formidable nomenclature of complicated maladies from which Dr. Hirsch declared him to be suffering.

"Let us end this discussion," said the latter, rising abruptly. "Give me a sheet of paper and a pencil. Good! Now with the aid of this pleximeter I will indicate accurately and diagram our poor friend's malady."

He drew from his capacious waistcoat the little wooden contrivance known as a pleximeter.

"Come here," he said to d'Argenton, who had grown very pale, and suddenly tearing open his coat, he spread out the sheet over the poet's breast, moving the pleximeter, sounding, and tracing certain lines with his pencil as he sounded.

Then he spread upon the table this paper, covered with hieroglyphics, like some geographical map drawn by a child.

"Judge for yourselves," he said. "Here is our friend's liver, outlined exactly from nature. Now, really, does that look like a liver — be frank! There is where it ought to be, and here is where it is. And note the gigantic proportions it has assumed at the expense of the other organs. Just imagine what disorders, what frightful ravages that must occasion in the neighboring parts of his body!"

With a few bold zigzag strokes of the pencil he indicated these ravages.

"This is frightful," murmured d'Argenton, in consternation at the drawings, his previous pallor deepening to a yellowish hue.

Charlotte felt her eyes fill with tears.

"Do you people really believe all that?" old Rivals burst forth. "Such science as that is barbarous. He is only ridiculing you."

"Ah, permit me, my dear colleague —"

But the old fellow would hear no more. His grog had been even stronger than usual that night, and the battle began in deadly earnest.

Standing where they could confront one another, brandishing their fists, they pummelled each other with the names of authorities, titles of books in Greek, Latin, Scandinavian, Hindoo, Chinese, Cochin-Chinese. Hirsch got the best of it with quotations over a yard long, whose accuracy no one could verify, because of their un-

familiar sound, but Rivals triumphed by the trumpet-blasts of sound he blew, the picturesque force of his language, finally replacing arguments by dire threats — not too elegantly phrased — of pitching his enemy overboard.

Neither Jack nor Charlotte were frightened in the least at this violent discussion, having often listened to similar ones at the Gymnase. But Labassindre, growing impatient at being denied a chance to put in a word, went out and leaned dreamily upon the railing of the terrace, to wake the sleeping echoes of the wood with his deep and resounding "note."

All the air around was startled by it. A flutter of wings was heard in the foliage, the peacocks of neighboring châteaux, nervous, timid creatures, responded with the cries of alarm they utter upon a summer day when a storm is approaching. The country-folk in their cottages also awoke. Old Salé and her husband cast a curious glance towards the brightly lighted windows of the Parisians while the light of the moon gleamed upon the little white façade of the house, on which stood out in relief the golden letters of its device: "*Parva domus, magna quies*" — "Little house, great repose."

X.

CÉCILE.

"WHERE are you going so early?" asked Dr. Hirsch, who had just come down lazily from his room. His question was addressed to Charlotte, who appeared, dressed in the height of fashion, prayer-book in hand, and followed by Jack, whom she had rigged in the favorite costume of Lord Peambock, which, though lengthened for the occasion, was still too short for him.

"We are going to mass, my friend. I am to offer the consecrated bread to-day; did not d'Argenton tell you? Come, make haste. No one must miss church this morning."

It was the fifteenth of August, Assumption Day. Highly flattered at the honor conferred upon her, Madame d'Argenton started for church as the last bell was ringing, and seated herself, with Jack, upon the bench reserved near the choir. The church was in festal array, specially lighted for the occasion, full of sunshine, and decked with flowers. Chanters and choristers were in white surplices, freshly ironed; in front of the choir stood a rustic table heaped with golden mounds of holy bread exhibited to the admiring gaze of the congregation. To lend a finishing touch to the picture, all the foresters, in green uniforms, hunting-knives

at their side and guns grounded, had come to join in the *Te Deum* of the official fête, a circumstance which the poachers and other pilferers of the forest were not slow in turning to their own advantage.

Certainly no one would have been more surprised than Ida de Barancy, had it been told her a year before that she would one day find herself seated in the choir of a village church, under the name of Vicomtesse d'Argenton, posing as respectability itself, her eyes bent upon a prayer-book — in full possession of the prestige of a married woman, receiving all the consideration shown to such, and with every appearance of one.

The complete novelty of this rôle amused her. She kept a watch over Jack, turned the pages of her prayer-book religiously, and knelt from time to time, with a rustle of petticoats that was highly edifying.

At the offertory, the beadle, armed with his halberd, came for little Jack, and bent to ask the mother what little girl he would choose to carry the collection-bag. Charlotte hesitated a moment. She recognized scarcely any one in that assemblage in its Sunday finery, where Parisian crinolines and bonnets gay with flowers had replaced the caps and frocks of weekday attire. The beadle pointed out Dr. Rivals' little granddaughter, a pretty child seated on the opposite side of the choir, beside an elderly lady dressed in black.

The two children started off behind the majestic halberd which kept time rhythmically to their

short steps. Cécile carried a velvet bag too large for her small fingers, and Jack held a tall taper adorned with satin streamers, artificial flowers trimmed with twisted silver. It would be hard to tell which made the prettier picture of the two, he in his English costume that added to his height, she, simply dressed, the long braids of her hair contrasting with the delicate pallor of the face, lit up by two eyes which had the soft gray tints of some rare pearl. The delicious fragrance of the consecrated bread, mingled with the perfume of incense, floated around them in the church, like the sacred and hallowed breath of the festival. Cécile offered the bag with a pretty little attempt at a smile, but Jack looked very solemn. That little hand in its white silk glove, trembled in his own, stirred in him a feeling half of pity, as if it were some bird he had dislodged from its warm downy nest, which could not have been softer than that little hand. Did he already feel that it would one day befriend him, that from her hand all the happiness life held in store for him would come?

They passed back and forth among the seats.

"A pretty pair they make," said the keeper's wife; adding in a lower voice, so that she might not be overheard: "she will be even prettier than her mother was; may she never suffer as much!"

The collection taken, Jack returned to his seat, feeling still the charm of contact with that little hand he had held so lightly; but his happiness was not to end there. As they passed out of church into the crowded square where the fire-

men's helmets and foresters' guns gleamed in the sunlight amongst the variegated hues of the dresses, Madame Rivals overtook the d'Argentons and asked permission to take Jack home to breakfast, and keep him for the afternoon to play with his companion of the morning. Charlotte blushed with pleasure, tied his necktie, stroked his pretty hair, and kissed him, saying:

"Be a good boy."

And the two children, as in their solemn walk during the offertory, started off together, followed by the grandmother, who had some difficulty in keeping up with them.

From that day, when Jack was not to be found at home, and any one asked where he was, it was no longer: "He is in the woods," but: "He is at the Rivals'."

The doctor lived at the end of the village farthest from Les Aulnettes, a one-story house similar to those inhabited by the country-folk of the neighborhood, differing from them only in having a brass plate and a knob near the door with the words "night-bell." It seemed very old with its blackened walls and heavy shutters, but some modern attempts at embellishment, though still unfinished, indicated that at some time some one had really thought of renovating it when a sudden catastrophe had come to interrupt the efforts the old house had made to look young again. For instance, above the front door a zinc veranda was still waiting for its glass roof, and when people rang the bell, they saw above their

heads only the empty rim of its frame. In the same fashion, on the right of the little yard planted with trees, an attempt had been made at a pavilion, but it never had gone beyond the ground-floor, where door and windows were indicated by some square holes.

These poor people's "misfortune" had come to them just about the time they started upon repairs, and haunted by a superstition those who love can easily understand, they had abandoned the work so suddenly interrupted.

That was eight years before. For eight years nothing had changed in the place, and although every one in the village had grown accustomed to the sight, the unfinished condition of the building gave it the discouraged appearance of one who has ceased to care for anything, and whose only reply to everything is merely: "What use would it be now?" The garden lay at the back of the house, reached by a whitewashed corridor, but that screen of floating verdure had become completely neglected. Grass grew along the walks, and great parasitic leaves covered the basin of the fountain, which no longer played.

The appearance of the occupants of the house was like that of the objects surrounding them. From Madame Rivals, who, at the end of eight years still wore mourning for her daughter, not relieved even by a white cap, to Cécile whose childish features bore an expression of deep gravity and melancholy out of keeping with her youth, and the old servant who had been with these good

folk over thirty years, and in part shared with them the burden of their sorrow, all dwelt in the oppressive atmosphere of a grief that is buried in silence.

The doctor alone escaped from the general depression. His continual drives in the open air, the distractions of the high-road, and perhaps, too, that philosophy which comes to those for whom death is a familiar sight, had aided the tendency of a temperament that was by nature frank, disposed to be light-hearted and fond of change.

While the constant presence of little Cécile, in whose features she already could trace a likeness to the mother's, was for Madame Rivals a perpetual renewal of her sorrow, the doctor on the contrary, regained his happy disposition by degrees, as his granddaughter, in growing up, reminded him more and more of the daughter he had lost. When he had been away all day, and found himself alone with the child — his wife busied about some household care, he indulged in gay, youthful outbursts, shouted sailors' songs with all the strength of his lungs, but stopped short before the silent reproach Madame Rivals cast at him on entering — a look that seemed to say, "Remember!" as though he were in some way to blame for the misfortune that had crushed them.

That mere reminder of their sorrow was sufficient to silence him, and he would sit mutely playing with the child's hair.

Amid such surroundings Cécile's childhood was indeed a sad one. She rarely went out, but passed

her days in the garden or in a big room called "the pharmacy," full of cases with little compartments, where bunches of herbs and roots were put to dry. From this room a door which was always closed led to the room of the young girl they mourned so deeply, a room in which every stage of her brief life was marked by some keepsake, reminders of her play-time, her school days, religious relics, articles that aided in her toilet, her books, her dresses carefully laid away in the closet, a picture of a first communion hanging on the wall — a whole museum of relics already grown yellow was this room which the mother entered with such pious care, and she alone, her sorrow never lessened at sight of the marks time had left upon these frail things.

Little Cécile often paused thoughtfully upon that threshold closed like a tomb. She was too pensive. She had never been sent to school, as if they feared for her the contact of the other children of the village, and this isolation was harmful for her. Her little body was weary for want of exercise. It lacked the life and vivacity, the thoughtless turbulence, the wild activity of children when among themselves, unconstrained by the criticism or ridicule of serious elders.

"She must have some amusement," said Monsieur Rivals to his wife. "There is that little d'Argenton — a charming boy, just her own age, and he is not the kind to gossip."

"Yes, but who are these people? Where do they come from? Nobody knows anything

about them," answered Madame Rivals, always mistrustful.

"The best of people, my dear. The husband slightly eccentric, it is true, but these artists, you know! The wife is rather silly, but such a good-hearted woman. As for their respectability, I'll vouch for that."

"You, what would you know?"

She sighed, and her look was full of reproach. She had not much confidence in her husband's perspicacity.

Old Rivals hung his head like a culprit; he did not give up his idea, however.

"Be careful," he said, "the child is listless. She will fall ill, and then, what? This little Jack is only a child. Cécile is no more. What could happen to them?"

At last the grandmother allowed herself to be won over, and Jack became Cécile's companion.

It was a new life for him. He did not come often at first, but after a while he came more frequently, and at last he went daily. Madame Rivals soon grew quite attached to the lovable child, saw what was discreet and tender in that nature repressed by indifference as Cécile's by sorrow. She observed that the child was completely neglected, that the buttons were missing from his clothes, that he was free at all hours of the day, and had neither lessons nor tasks assigned him.

"You do not go to school, then, my little Jack?"

"No, madame."

He added, for there is often innate delicacy in a child's heart, "Mamma teaches me."

Alas, poor Charlotte, with her bird-brain, would have found that no light task. Moreover it was too evident that both his parents were quite regardless of his existence.

"It is incredible," said Madame Rivals to her husband, "that they should allow that child to lounge about with nothing to do from morning till night."

"But what can be done?" answered the doctor, anxious to excuse his friends. "It seems he will not work, or at least, cannot. His head is rather weak."

"Yes, perhaps, but I fancy his stepfather has no love for him. These children of a first marriage are always regarded as outcasts."

Jack found real friends in that house. Cécile was very fond of him, and could not bear to have him out of her sight. They played together in the garden when the weather was fine, and at other times in the pharmacy. Madame Rivals was always there. As there was no apothecary at Étiolles she put up the simplest of her husband's prescriptions, sedatives, powders, and syrups. After twenty years' practice in that line the good old soul had become quite an experienced hand, and in the doctor's absence many came to consult her. The children during these visits amused themselves greatly, spelling out the barbarous Latin on those thick bottles — *sirupus gummi;* or cut out labels

with a pair of scissors, and glued the little paper bags. He showed all a boy's awkwardness, and Cécile the serious absorption of a little girl who will one day be a useful woman, ready for all the minutiæ of an industrious and sedentary existence. She had before her constantly the example of her grandmother, who attended to the pharmacy, kept her husband's books, copied out his prescriptions, busied herself with the account of moneys received, and noted the visits made during the day.

"Come! where have you been to-day?" she would ask the doctor, upon his return.

The worthy man would generally forget half the visits he had made, and voluntarily or involuntarily would suppress some, for he was as generous as he was absent-minded. Some bills owed him dragged on unpaid after a lapse of twenty years. Ah! if it had not been for his wife how he would have been plundered! She would chide him gently, measure out even his grog, attend to the slightest details of his dress, and when he was ready to start out, the little girl, young as she was, would say with great gravity, "Come here, grandpa! Let me see whether you have not forgotten something."

There was a touch of the celestial in the kindliness of this man's nature.

It could be read in his eyes, clear and innocent as a child's, but without the keen mischievousness of a child's gaze. Though he had travelled all over the world, seen many lands, met many people, science had kept his nature fresh and un-

spoiled. He did not believe in evil, had lost none of his illusions, his kindly faith in all living creatures, man or beast. He would not even fatigue his horse, an old companion who had served him for twenty years, and when the path was up-hill, the road stony, or when the animal lagged a little, as if tired, he would descend from his gig, and walk bareheaded in the sun, the wind, or the rain, leading his horse peaceably by the bridle.

The horse too had learned to accommodate himself to his master; he knew that the doctor sometimes lengthened his visits, finding it hard to take leave, and he had a way of his own of shaking the reins in front of the door of a patient.

At other times when the hour for returning to breakfast or to dinner approached, he would stop in the middle of the road, facing obstinately straight for home.

"Why! sure enough! you are right," Rivals would say.

Then the two returned very quickly, or else fell to quarrelling.

"Ah, but you are a provoking beast," the doctor would scold good-naturedly. "Did ever any one see such an animal! Don't I tell you I have one more visit to make? Go home by yourself, if you like."

Whereupon he would rush off furiously to visit his patient, while the horse, as obstinate as himself quietly took the road to the village, dragging after him the carriage, somewhat lighter than

before, for nothing was left in it but books and papers. Then the people of the village who met them upon the road, would say: "Oh, Monsieur Rivals has had a tiff with his beast again."

From the time of Jack's appearance, the doctor's great delight was to take the two children with him upon his rounds through Étiolles. The carriage was large, and held three quite comfortably. And when he sat between those two laughing children, the good doctor felt that all the gloom of his home was scattered to the winds at sight of that fair face of Nature who folds sorrow itself to her heart, cradles it, lulls it to sleep. He was a child with these children. Jack, too, was enchanted, for he had never seen before so many vineyards, so much water.

"Guess what is sown over there," Cécile would say, as they came in sight of broad green slopes undulating like the sea. "Is it barley? or wheat? or rye?"

Jack always blundered — and then what a merry laugh there was!

"Did you hear that, grandpapa! He thought it was rye!"

Then she taught him how to distinguish the full ears of wheat, the bearded barley, the waving oats, the pink sainfoin, the purple-tinted lucerne, the golden yellow of the fields of *œillettes*, all the bright things that carpet the meadows, those green harvests that are gathered up in autumn, and piled in separate stacks at intervals over the broad stretch of open country.

To whatever house the doctor was called, the children were heartily welcome.

Sometimes they went to a farmhouse. While Monsieur Rivals climbed the wooden stairway leading to the bedroom, the children were carried off to see the chickens, the bread taken out of the oven, or the milking of the cows at the stable door; sometimes they visited some water-mill built upon the Orge, the Yères, or the Essonne. These resembled ancient strongholds with their greenish footbridges and the damp mould that gave their great walls and disjointed stones an air of premature old age.

When the children were weary of those great white rooms where the dust of flour rose continually whenever the floor or the walls were shaken, they would spend hours at a time watching the mill-wheel churning the water, the bubbling of the mill-dam, and yonder, upon the little, narrow, peaceful stream, fringed with dark gnarled willows, a watery poultry yard, where a flock of ducks were splashing about.

It is curious to see how these peasant folk regard the intrusion of illness into their homes. Life goes on unhindered, and without pause. The cattle go to pasture and come home again at the usual hour. If the husband is ill, the wife works in his place, and has not even a moment's time to attend to him, worry, or be unhappy. Neither land nor beast waits for any man. There is work for all, the livelong day, and when night comes, the wife falls asleep from sheer exhaustion, and sleeps

soundly. The unfortunate patient, lying upstairs over the room where the mill is grinding, the stable filled with bellowing cows, is like some wounded soldier fallen during battle. No one takes heed of him. It is quite sufficient, they think, if they have found shelter for him in some corner, propped up against a tree, or in the rear at the side of some ditch, while the battle goes on, claiming every arm. Around the sick man the corn is thrashed, the grain sifted, whilst the cocks are crowing loudly. Uninterrupted stir and bustle and commotion, while the master of the house, his face turned to the wall, awaits with grim and silent resignation the gathering dusk or the dawn glimmering through the eastern window-panes, the hour when either his pain or his life shall cease.

And that is why the children never found sadness in these peasants' houses where they entered so often. They were much petted, there was always a cake specially for them, the finest oats for the horse, and a basket of fruit to be taken to the grandmother.

The doctor was so beloved of all, so kindly, so unmindful of his own interests! The villagers adored and duped him at the same time.

"Oh! he is such a charitable man," they said in discussing him. "Why! if he had wished, he could have been rich long ago!"

But notwithstanding, they contrived never to pay his bill when they could avoid it, and this with a man of his disposition was no such difficult matter. When he left the house after a consulta-

tion, he was surrounded by a noisy and persistent flock of admirers. Never monarch on parade found his coach so besieged as was that humble gig of the doctor's at the moment of his departure.

"Monsieur Rivals, what shall I give my little girl?"

"And my poor man, Monsieur Rivals, can nothing be done for him?"

"That powder you gave me, was it to eat or to rub in? Have you a pinch of it left? I've just about finished mine."

The doctor would answer all these inquiries, make one put out his tongue, distribute little packages of powder, give away quinine-wine, and everything else he had, and finally would depart, emptied, plundered, squeezed out, followed by the acclamations and benedictions of these worthy children of the soil, who, wiping a tear from one eye, would exclaim: "What a kind man he is," giving at the same time a knowing wink of the other that seemed to say: "But how simple!" And he was very lucky if at the last moment some little courier in wooden shoes did not run after him to "fetch him quick! quick!" for a sick man, twelve miles away.

At last they would turn home again, and those sunset drives along the wooded paths, where the trees stretched out their long arms, or along country lanes where they saw flocks of swallows, and children at their games, and herds winding homeward were filled with the delightful peace and hush of the landscape. The Seine, over which the

blue evening mist had begun to thicken, ran towards the horizon, a thread of liquid gold. Against that luminous background clumps of slender trees, crowned like palm trees with tufts of green foliage, and rows of white houses rising on the hillside suggested some Oriental landscape one has seen only in a dream, one of those cities of Judea forming the fit background for a Holy Family, taking its way at sundown along some ascent of road.

"That looks like Nazareth," said little Cécile, recalling certain Bible pictures she had seen, and the two children talked together, telling each other stories, while the gig rolled along, bringing them nearer every moment to the supper Jack often shared with them.

The result of all these drives together was that Monsieur Rivals discovered little d'Argenton was a child whose intelligence was very wide-awake, his mind concentrated but deep, and that the few crumbs of instruction he had received had left lasting traces. His generous kindliness quickly comprehended that the child had been abandoned by his own people, and he determined to make up to the boy for their indifference. He started the practice of devoting an hour to Jack every day after dinner, making him work during this hour, which had formerly been devoted to the doctor's nap. Those who know how much that afternoon siesta means will understand what heroic self-denial it required to give it up.

In return Jack applied himself with all his heart

to his tasks. It was not difficult to study in the busy and peaceful atmosphere of the Rivals' household; Cécile was nearly always present during the lesson, listening religiously while her friend recited the *Epitome*, her thoughtful eyes sending him now and then a glance full of inspiration, as if to aid his understanding; and very proud and joyous she was when, after dinner, her grandfather would spread out Jack's exercise-books upon the table, and say with a look of satisfaction mingled with surprise: "Why, that is very good indeed!"

In his mother's hearing Jack never spoke of his work. He rejoiced in the thought that he would be able to prove to her triumphantly that the poet had been mistaken in his infallible and formidable diagnosis, and the little conspiracy between the kind doctor and Jack easily escaped discovery, for the inhabitants of *Parva domus* concerned themselves less and less about the child. He went out and returned at will, going and coming as he chose, coming in only in time for meals, and seating himself at the end of the table, which was lengthened every day to seat a fresh relay of guests.

To people his solitude, and have about him that ear-splitting vacuity which he called "an intellectual environment," d'Argenton had thrown his doors wide open to the Failures. But the poet was not fond of throwing away his money, was on the contrary considerable of a miser, and whenever Charlotte would say, very timidly, "I have no more money, my love," he would answer with an emphatic "Already!" and an unamiable frown

which was not encouraging. But with him vanity was the ruling passion, and the delight of parading his happiness, of playing host, exciting the envy of all those poor devils, overcame his most cautious calculations.

It soon became known in the world of the Failures that not so far away, out in the country, was a delightful little spot, where were a good table and pleasant quarters if one should happen to miss the train. And they would call out from one end to another of the tavern they frequented:

"Who is going to the d'Argentons'?"

When, after some effort, the wherewithal for the trip had been scraped together, they would arrive in a crowd, and quite unexpectedly, Charlotte would become desperate, not knowing what to do.

"Quick, quick, Mother Archambauld; there's company coming! Kill a rabbit or two. Quick, make an omelette, two omelettes, three omelettes!"

"Lord save us! Did any one ever see before such a crew as that?" murmured the keeper's wife, half-frightened, for there were always new faces, and such shocks of hair, such beards, such startling manners!

D'Argenton never ceased to feel satisfaction in showing the newcomers over every corner of the house, and making them admire all the improvements. Then this troop of graybeard boys would scatter to roam along the roads, by the river, in the forest, with the neighing delight, the extravagant capers of old horses turned out to grass.

Against the fresh landscape those tall and seedy

hats, those threadbare black coats, and faces hollowed by all the envy and suffering of Parisian life, seemed to look more sordid, faded, and dingy than ever. Later in the day they all gathered about the table, a table that was set all day long, without time to brush up its crumbs from one meal to another. They lingered about it, spending whole afternoons in drinking, discussing, and smoking.

It was merely the pothouse transported to the country. D'Argenton was triumphant. He could repeat his interminable poem, retail the same projects ten times over, saying upon every possible occasion, "I, my; I, my," with all the authority of a gentleman to whom the wine, the house, and all within it belong. Charlotte, too, was very happy. For her capricious nature and Bohemian instincts these incessant comings and goings seemed to renew her youth. She was courted, admired, and, while remaining true to her lover, she understood how to exhibit just enough coquetry to stimulate the poet's admiration and make him appreciative of his happiness.

On Sundays she received the wives of the Failures, those brave creatures who toiled feverishly all the week, and whom their husbands occasionally granted the luxury of a little outing with themselves. Towards these she played the part of a Lady Bountiful, calling one and another "my dear child," and displaying her Louis XV morning-gowns by the side of their secondhand clothing.

But of all the Failures the most assiduous at

Les Aulnettes were Labassindre and Dr. Hirsch. The latter, who had at first come to stay a few days, did not budge for months, and the house had become his own. He did the honors for the invited guests, wore the poet's linen and his hats, stuffing the crowns with reams of paper, for the head of this whimsical creature was exceedingly small, so small that in looking at it one wondered how it had been possible to cram so much knowledge into it, and was no longer surprised at the startling confusion caused by such warehousing.

But such as he was, d'Argenton was unable to pass his days without the doctor, in whom he had a confidant, attentive to every ailment of this imaginary invalid, and, although he had not much faith in Hirsch's science and was careful never to take any of his prescriptions, that presence was comforting in itself.

"It is I — I have put him on his feet again!" said the other with bold self-assurance. Consequently Dr. Rivals had lost much of his authority in the house.

Days and months passed, autumn enveloped *Parva domus* in melancholy mists, the snow of winter covered the pigeon-house. April showers came, beating upon the resounding slate roof, and then a new spring garlanded the house with sprays of lilac. Otherwise nothing had changed. The poet's lumber-yard was overstocked more than ever with projects, the number of his imaginary ailments had increased, and the inevitable Hirsch had decorated them with new and fanciful names.

Charlotte was as sentimental, as pretty, as insignificant as ever. Jack had grown, and had worked hard. In ten months, without system or rules, he had made astounding progress, and was much farther advanced than most schoolboys of his age.

"See what I have done with him in a year," said Monsieur Rivals proudly to d'Argenton. "Now send him to some school, and I'll answer for it, something can be made of this little fellow."

"Ah, Doctor, Doctor — how kind you are," exclaimed Charlotte, a little ashamed at the indirect reproach contained in this stranger's solicitude, in contrast to her own maternal indifference. But d'Argenton himself took the matter more coolly, said he would see, he would consider, that there were serious objections to a college-education. When he was alone with Charlotte, he gave full vent to his ill-humor.

"Why does that fellow meddle with this affair? Every one knows his own duty in life. Does he think he is going to teach me mine? He would be better employed studying his physic, that village sawbones!"

But his self-love had been very deeply wounded. From that day he would often remark solemnly: "The doctor was quite right. That child must be looked after."

Alas, he did look after him!

"Come here, youngster," the singer Labassindre called out one day to Jack. He had been walking back and forth with Hirsch and d'Argenton, and all three appeared to be engaged in some deep con-

spiracy. The child approached them, feeling somewhat uneasy, for it was not the custom of the poet or his friends to waste any words upon him.

"Who has been making — *beûh, beûh!* that squirrel-trap in the big walnut-tree at the end of the garden?"

Jack grew pale, expecting to be scolded, but as his lips would not utter a lie, he answered:

"I did."

As Cécile had wished to have a live squirrel, he had made a cage of wires woven to form a trap, and had set it in the branches in a most ingenious fashion, and though it had not as yet caught a single squirrel, it was quite capable of capturing one.

"And did you make that all by yourself, without a model?"

He answered timidly:

"Why yes, Monsieur Labassindre, I had no model."

"But that is extraordinary, extraordinary," said the great singer, turning towards the others. "Positively the child is a born mechanic, he has it at the end of his fingers. He has a natural talent that way."

"Ah! there you 've hit it, a natural talent," said the poet, raising his head triumphantly.

Dr. Hirsch also observed, looking tremendously important: "Why to be sure, a natural talent. There 's everything in that."

Without any further notice of the child, they resumed their walk along the path of the orchard

solemnly, slowly with the gestures of hierarchs, halting now and then, when one of them had something of unusual importance to say.

That evening after dinner there was a lengthy discussion upon the terrace.

"Yes, Countess," said Labassindre, addressing Charlotte, as if desirous of convincing her upon some point already debated among themselves, "the working man is the man of the future. The nobility has had its day, the middle class has a few more years to live. The working man's day has come! Scorn, if you will, his horny hands, his sacred frock. In twenty years that smock-frock will rule the world."

"He is right," said d'Argenton gravely, and the small head of Dr. Hirsch nodded energetically by way of approval.

Singularly enough, Jack who, since his sojourn in the Gymnase, had become accustomed to the singer's tirades upon the social question, and never listened to them in the least, for he found them very stupid, listened that night and with a strange emotion, as if he divined the hidden purpose back of these disconnected remarks and at whom the blow was aimed.

Labassindre continued to draw his enchanting picture of the life of the laboring man.

"Oh that noble, proud life of independence! When I think that I was imbecile enough to leave it. Ah, had one his life to live over again!"

And he told them of his life as a blacksmith at

the iron-works of Indret, when he was known simply as Roudic, for the name Labassindre was merely that of his village — Basse-Indre, a large Breton town on the banks of the Loire. He recalled those delightful hours spent by the fire of the forge, naked to the waist, and hammering the iron, beating time to the music of his worthy companions.

"Come now," he said, "tell me, have I been successful on the stage?"

"You have indeed," answered the doctor with a brazen disregard for fact.

"You know whether I have had my share of golden laurel-crowns, medals, snuff-boxes. Well, in spite of all those souvenirs which are precious to me, — there is no one of them I prize as much as this."

Turning up his shirt-sleeve as far as he could, to display his enormous arm, as hairy as a bear's paw, the singer pointed to a great red and blue tattooing, which represented two crossed forge-hammers, surrounded by a circlet of oak leaves, with the inscription around it: "Labor and Liberty." Seen at a distance it resembled the indelible marks of some tremendous blow of the fist; the unlucky fellow did not tell them that this tattooing, which had resisted every effort to remove it, all the salves he had rubbed upon it, had been the despair of his theatrical life, had hindered his raising his sleeves to display his biceps in playing *La Muette*, *Herculaneum*, and all those heroes of southern lands, who can thrust carelessly over their bare

arms the draperies drawn aside from their conquering breasts.

Unable to efface the tattooing, Labassindre now carried it as proudly as a banner, brandishing and exhibiting it. Ah! accursed be that manager from Nantes who had overheard him one evening as he was singing in the factory for a wounded comrade. Accursed be that marvellous deep note nature had given him! If he had not turned away from the right path, at that hour he would have been like his brother Roudic, foreman over the workmen in the iron works at Indret, with a magnificent salary, lodging, light, fuel, and an assured pension for his old age.

"Oh, certainly, certainly, that is a fine life to lead," said Charlotte, "but one must have strength for it. I have heard you yourself say that it was very hard, very laborious."

"Laborious? Yes, for a milksop, but it seems to me that here the case is quite different, that the individual in question has a splendid constitution."

"Splendid constitution!" repeated Dr. Hirsch, "I 'll answer for that."

Of course, since he answered for it, there was nothing more to be said on that matter.

And yet Charlotte endeavored to make a few objections. According to her view, all natures were not the same. Some were finer, more aristocratic than others, and found certain callings repugnant to them.

Whereupon d'Argenton grew furious.

"All women are alike," he exclaimed brutally, "Here is one of them! She has begged me to look after this young gentleman, and God knows whether the task is amusing! He is hardly a promising specimen. And yet I have tried to do for him, I have called my friends here to aid me, and now she seems to think I would have done better not to meddle with things at all."

"But that is not what I said," replied Charlotte, in tears at having displeased her master.

"No, that is not what she said," repeated the others, and finding they upheld her, and were ready to intervene in her favor, the poor woman completely collapsed, amid a perfect torrent of tears, like some beaten child that only dares to cry when others are ready to protect it. Jack left the terrace abruptly. He could not bear to see his mother weep, and not spring at the throat of the brute who was torturing her.

During the next few days nothing more was said. But the child noticed that his mother's bearing towards him was quite changed. She looked at him, kissed him oftener than before, kept him closer at her side, making him feel in the sudden passionate fervor with which she clasped him to her breast, the sense of approaching separation. He became still more uneasy when he heard d'Argenton telling Monsieur Rivals with a bitter smile that made his moustaches quiver:

"Doctor, I am thinking a great deal about your pupil. One of these days I shall have news for you. I feel sure that you will be pleased."

And the good man returned to his home delighted.

"You see now," he said to his wife, "at last I have opened his eyes."

Madame Rivals shook her head.

"Perhaps, but I mistrust that deadly glance of his. It promises nothing good for the child. When the one who bestirs himself in our behalf is an enemy, better he should sit with hands folded, and do nothing."

Jack thought so too.

XI.

LIFE IS NOT A ROMANCE.

ONE Sunday morning, shortly after the ten o'clock train had arrived, bringing Labassindre and a noisy batch of the Failures, Jack, who had just been busily watching a squirrel near the famous trap, heard his mother's voice calling him.

The voice came from the poet's study, from that solemn laboratory whence issued the idle and senseless observations, the wrath, the sullen and hateful vigilance of the enemy. Warned by the tone of his mother's voice or by that sudden telepathy of the nerves so subtle in some natures, the child, said to himself: "It will come to-day," and trembled as he went up the winding staircase.

It was more than ten months since he had entered that sanctuary, and many changes had taken place. It seemed to have lost something of its old-time majesty. The hangings were faded by the sun, and impregnated with tobacco-smoke. The Algerian divan had burst open in places, the oaken table showed many a crack, the muddy inkstand and rusty pens bore witness to the idleness and endless debating that had stamped the place with the commonplace vulgarity of a tavern.

Only the Henri II chair remained, standing like a throne and symbol of authority in the midst of

all this decay. There d'Argenton was seated to receive the child, while Labassindre and Dr. Hirsch stood at his side like assistant-judges, and the weekly visitors, the nephew of Berzelius and two or three old graybeards were stretched upon the divan, enveloped in clouds of smoke.

Jack took in the whole situation at a glance. They were all there, the tribunal, the judge, the witnesses, while his mother stood apart at an open window, seeming to fasten her eyes upon the landscape, as if she sought to detach her attention and responsibility from that which was about to take place.

"Come hither, minion!" said the poet, whose old oaken chair occasionally inspired him with a fancy for the diction of the *viel langaige*—"come hither."

His voice, in spite of its affected intonations, was so hard, inflexible, and wooden that it seemed as if the Henri II chair itself were speaking:

"Boy, I have told you many a time that life is not a romance. You must have formed some idea of that, for you have seen my struggles, my sufferings in the foremost ranks of literary conflict. Sparing neither of my time nor my energies, sometimes wearied but never vanquished, persisting even against fate, I have fought the good fight. And now it is your turn. Enter the lists. You are now a man."

Poor little "man"—he was scarcely twelve years old.

"Yes, you are now a man. You must prove to

us that you have not only the age and stature of a man, but the heart of one. I have left you for a year to the free development of your nature, that your muscles and your intellect might have play. Some have accused me of neglecting you! Oh, routine, routine! On the contrary I was watching, studying you, all the while; I have never lost sight of you. Thanks to this long and exhaustive study, thanks to that infallible method of observation which I may flatter myself I possess, at last I understand you. I have discovered what are your aptitudes, instincts, temperament. I know now what is the best way to act in behalf of your interests, and, having given to your mother the result of those observations, I have acted."

At this point in his address, d'Argenton paused long enough to receive the congratulations of Dr. Hirsch and Labassindre, while the nephew of Berzelius and the others, absorbed silently in their long pipes, raised their heads a moment and dropped them again like tiny puppets, and contented themselves with repeating portentously:

"That 's good! very good!"

The frightened child tried to make sense out of this incomprehensible jargon, which passed over his head like a cloud charged with electricity. He asked himself: "What is going to happen to me now?"

As for Charlotte, she continued to gaze out of the window, shading her eyes with her hand, as though she were watching some far-away object.

"Let us come to the point," said the poet, sud-

denly sitting upright in his chair and speaking in a sharp voice which stung the boy like the cut of a horse-whip. "The letter you are about to hear will make things clearer to you than any explanation. Read it, Labassindre."

Gravely as a clerk at a court-martial, the singer took from his pocket a letter which might have been that of a peasant or a recruit, clumsily folded and sealed, and after two or three cavernous bellows he read:

Indret Ironworks, (Loire Inférieure).

My dear Brother, — As I told you in my last, I have spoken to the manager about the young man your friend is interested in, and although this young man seems very young indeed, and hardly fitted to be an apprentice, the manager has consented to my taking him as one. He will have board and lodging with us, and I promise to make of him, as far as possible, a good workman at the end of his four years. We are all well. My wife and Zenaïde send you greeting, and so do the Nantais and myself.

Roudic,

Foreman of the Setting-up Shop.

"You hear, Jack," said d'Argenton, his eyes flashing, his arm outstretched, "in four years you will be a good workman, that is to say, the noblest, proudest being that exists upon this enslaved earth. In four years you will be that most reverenced of men, a good workman."

Yes indeed, he had heard — "a good workman." But he could not tell what it all meant, he was trying to understand.

He had sometimes seen working men in Paris. Some lived in the Passage des Douze Maisons, and quite near there was a factory, and he had often watched the people coming out towards six o'clock, a mob of men with oil-stained blouses, their hands blackened, rough, and deformed by work.

The thought that he must wear a blouse was what first impressed him. He recalled the scornful tone in which his mother had said: "Those men in blouses are working men," how carefully she had avoided the least contact of their soiled clothes in the street.

All Labassindre's tirades about the duties, the influence of the working man in the nineteenth century, did, it is true, occur to him, offsetting and making less impressive those vague recollections of his. But the fact that stood out most distinctly and with fatal clearness in his mind was that he must go away, leave the forest, whose green tops he could view from where he stood, must see no more of the Rivals, and, worst of all, leave his mother, whom he had found again with such difficulty and whom he loved so much.

Merciful Heaven, what was she doing there at that window, still looking out, and seemingly aloof from all that was going on around her. During the last few moments she had lost her air of immovable indifference. A convulsive shudder shook her from head to foot and the hand with which she had shaded her eyes was pressed against them as if to hide her tears. Ah, the outlook

upon that landscape must have been dreary enough, sad indeed that horizon where the sun has set so often, where so many dreams, so many illusions, so many passing loves and passions sink from sight and are lost forever.

"Then I must go away?" gasped the child in a choked voice, speaking mechanically, as one who has but one absorbing thought, which must utter itself.

At that naïve question the entire tribunal gazed at him with a pitying smile, but from the window a great sob was heard.

"We shall start in a week, my boy," said Labassindre briskly. "I have not seen my brother for a long time. It will put new vigor into me to see the fire of my old forge again, by the Gods!"

And as he spoke he drew up his sleeve, swelling the muscles of his big, tattooed, hairy arm.

"He is superb," said Dr. Hirsch.

D'Argenton, however, who had not lost sight of the weeping figure, looked absent-minded, and frowned ominously.

"You may go, Jack," he said, "and be ready to start in a week."

Jack went downstairs, overwhelmed, stupefied. "In a week, in a week!" The street-door was open. He rushed out, bare-headed, just as he was — ran towards Étiolles, till he reached the house of his friends, just in time to meet the doctor starting upon his rounds. In a few words Jack told him what had taken place.

Monsieur Rivals was indignant.

"A working man? He wants to make a working man of you? That is looking after you with a vengeance! Wait a bit. I'll go myself and have a talk with Monsieur, your stepfather!"

Those who saw them pass through the village the worthy doctor gesticulating, talking very loudly, little Jack accompanying him, hatless and panting for breath, said to each other, "Some one must really be ill at Les Aulnettes."

No one was ill, however. When the doctor arrived, they were already seated at table. For owing to the capricious stomach of the master of the house, and as in all places where ennui prevails, the interval between meal-times was constantly shortened.

Every one wore a smiling face, and even Charlotte herself was heard humming, as she came down from her room.

"I would like to speak a word with you, Monsieur d'Argenton," said old Rivals, his lips quivering.

The poet twirled his big moustache.

"Very well, Doctor, sit down there. A plate will be set for you, and you can speak the word while you eat your breakfast."

"No, thank you, I am not hungry, and besides what I have to say to yourself and to madame," — he bowed to Charlotte who had just entered — "is strictly private."

"I think I can guess what has brought you here," said d'Argenton who was not at all anxious

for a tête-à-tête with the doctor. "You want to talk about the child, do you not?"

"Exactly so. About the child."

"Then in that case you can speak. These gentlemen know all about this matter, and my actions are too loyal and disinterested to fear the light of day."

"But, my love —" Charlotte ventured to say, for she dreaded this open discussion, for several reasons.

"You may speak, Doctor," said d'Argenton coldly.

Standing in front of the table the other began:

"Jack tells me you are going to send him to serve an apprenticeship at the Indret iron-works. Is that serious, tell me?"

"Quite serious, my dear Doctor."

"Have a care, then," continued Dr. Rivals, trying to control his anger, "the child has not been trained for such a hard life as that. Just when he is a growing boy, you are going to throw him out of his element, into a new atmosphere. You are trifling with his life and health. He has not the constitution for such a life. He is not robust enough."

"Ah, but permit me to remark, my dear colleague —" interrupted Dr. Hirsch solemnly.

Monsieur Rivals shrugged his shoulders disdainfully, and without so much as a glance in that direction, resumed:

"It is I who tell you this, madame" — he purposely addressed himself to Charlotte, who was

singularly embarrassed by this appeal to the feelings she had striven to repress — "it is not possible for your child to stand such a life; you, his mother should know this better than any other; you are aware that his nature is fine, delicate, unable to resist fatigue. I am speaking now of physical pain only. But do you think that a child so gifted, whose mind is already open to receive knowledge, will not suffer a thousand deaths in that enforced stagnation, that torpor of all the intellectual faculties to which you are about to condemn him."

"You are mistaken, Doctor," said d'Argenton, thoroughly irritated. "I know that fellow better than any one else. I have watched him at work. He is not fit for anything but manual labor. Whatever aptitudes he has, lie in that direction, and there only. And when I offer him the means of developing those aptitudes, when I put into his hands a magnificent calling, my fine young gentleman, instead of thanking me, begins to make complaints to others, and goes off seeking protectors outside his home, among strangers."

Jack was about to protest. But his friend saved him the trouble.

"He did not come to complain. He merely informed me of your decision, and I said to him what I now repeat before you all: 'Jack, my child, don't let them do it! Throw yourself into the arms of your parents, the mother who loves you, your mother's husband who should love you for her sake. Entreat them, implore them. Ask



dismay at the thought that there might ever be any possible estrangement between his mother and himself.

He stepped towards the middle of the room, and tried to steady his voice.

"I will not be a workman," he said resolutely.

"Oh, Jack," murmured Charlotte despairingly.

It was d'Argenton's turn to speak.

"Ah, you will not be a workman! Oh, indeed! here is a young man who will or will not accept a thing that I have decided myself. You will *not* be a workman. But you are willing to eat, are n't you? And you are willing to be clothed, fed, sheltered, spoiled. Very well. I tell you, I 've had enough of you, you detestable little parasite; and if you do not choose to work, I at least refuse to be any longer your dupe."

He paused abruptly, and passing from his mad rage to the glacial manner habitual to him:

"Go to your room," he said. "I will see what is to be done."

"What is to be done, my dear d'Argenton, I will soon tell you."

But Jack did not hear the end of Monsieur Rivals' sentence, for d'Argenton shoved him out of the room.

In his bedroom, the noise of the discussion reached him like the varied sounds of a great orchestra. He could distinguish the voices, and recognize them all, but one voice was swallowed up in another, all of them united by their resonance, until there was only a discordant uproar, in

which bits of phrases could be made out here and there.

"That's a lie!"

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!"

"Life is not a romance."

"The sacred blouse — *beûh, beûh!*"

At last the thunders of old Rivals' voice resounded as he crossed the threshold:

"May I be hanged if I ever set foot in this house again."

Then the door banged noisily, and there was a prolonged silence in the dining-room, interrupted only by the rattle of forks that were kept constantly in motion.

They were breakfasting.

"You wish to degrade him, to make him lower than yourselves." The child could not forget that phrase, and he understood only too well, without those words, that this was the real intention of his enemy.

Then a thousand times, no! He would not be a working man.

The door opened. His mother entered. She had been crying, genuine tears, that leave their furrows. For the first time the look of a mother appeared upon the face of that pretty woman, a mother in sorrow, stabbed to the heart.

"Listen to me, Jack," she said, trying to be severe. "I must talk to you seriously. You have just made me very unhappy by putting yourself in open rebellion against your true friends, and refusing to accept the position they have

offered you. Of course, I know that this new existence —"

While she spoke, she evaded the child's eyes, in which there was an expression so sorrowful, reproachful and full of anguish that she would not have been able to resist it.

"That this new existence which we have planned for you is apparently quite out of keeping with the life you have led up to this day. I confess, myself, that at first the thought of it terrified me, but you heard, did you not, what was said to you? The condition of the laboring man is quite different from what it once was, oh, entirely different, entirely different. The day of the working man has come, you understand. The middle class has had its day, the nobility too, — though, really the nobility, I think — But at your age is n't it really much better to allow yourself to be guided by those who love you and who have experience?"

A sob from the child interrupted her:

"Then you too, you too, send me away."

This time the mother in her was too strong to be repressed. She took him in her arms, and clasped him passionately to her breast.

"I, I send you, away? Can you think such a thing? Is it possible? Come, be calm, don't tremble like that. You know how much I love you, and that if it depended upon me, you should never leave me. But we must be reasonable, and think a little about the future. Alas, that future looks dark enough for us."

And with one of those sudden outbursts of words that she still gave vent to at times, when the restraint of her master's presence was removed, she attempted to explain to Jack, hesitatingly, with many reticences, that their position in life was somewhat irregular.

"You see, my dear, you are still very young; there are some things you cannot understand now. Some day when you are older, I will tell you the secret of your birth, a real romance, my dear. Some day I will tell you the name of your father, and the singular fatality of which your mother and yourself were the victims. But at present all that is necessary for you to know and understand is that we have nothing of our own, my poor child, and that we are absolutely dependent upon Him. How, then, can I oppose your going, when I know that he is sending you away for your own good? I don't like to ask anything of him. He has already done so much for us. And besides, he is not rich, and that terrible artistic career is so expensive for him. He could not really afford the expense of educating you. What do you wish to become of me between you two? Something must be decided. Ah, if I could only go myself in your stead to that Indret! Remember, they are providing you with a profession. And would n't you be proud to live independent of every one, earn your bread, and be your own master?"

By the sudden flash in the child's eyes she saw she had struck a telling blow this time, and very

softly in the caressing, coaxing voice that belongs to motherhood, she whispered: "Do this for me, Jack, will you? Put yourself in a position to earn your living as soon as possibe. Who knows whether I may not myself some day have to appeal to you as my only support, my one friend?"

Did she believe what she was saying? Had she some presentiment, one of those swift glimpses into the future which lays bare the secrets of destiny and all the disappointments life holds in store? Or was she merely carried away by that whirlwind of her own phrases, by her own impulsive sentimentality?

However it may have been, she could not have found a better means of convincing that little generous spirit. The effect was instantaneous. The thought that his mother might some day have need of him, that by working he might be able to come to her aid, suddenly decided him.

He looked her straight in the eyes.

"Swear to me you will always love me, that you will never be ashamed of me, even if my hands are black."

"Shall I love you, my Jack?" Her only answer was to cover him with caresses, concealing beneath those passionate kisses her anxiety and remorse—for from that moment the unhappy woman knew what remorse was; it never left her for the rest of her life, and she could never think of her child without feeling a knife at her heart.

But the boy, as if he understood what uncertainty,

terror, and shame hid beneath her embraces, sprang up and started towards the stairway.

"Come, mamma. Let us go down. I will tell him I shall do as he says."

Below, the Failures were still at table. All were struck by the grave and resolute bearing with which the child entered.

"I ask your pardon," he said to d'Argenton; "I was wrong to refuse what you offered me a while ago. I accept now, and I thank you."

"'T is well, child," answered the poet solemnly; "I did not doubt that reflection would put an end to your opposition. I am glad to see that you recognize the loyalty of my intentions. Thank our friend Labassindre, for it is to him you owe your good fortune. He it is who has opened wide for you the door of the future."

The singer extended his great paw, in which Jack's hand was quite swallowed up.

"It 's a bargain, old boy," he said affecting to treat him as if they were two old comrades working in the same shop, the same factory; from that moment he never spoke to him except in the brutal and familiar tone which workmen use towards each other as a badge of companionship.

During that last week Jack rambled through the woods and fields incessantly. He felt anxious and uneasy, rather than sad, and from time to time the thought of the responsibility he was about to assume gave to his pretty features an unusual expression, that furrow between the eyebrows which in young people indicates some effort of the

will. He was old Jack now, and he was revisiting all his favorite haunts, like some man who, step by step, makes a pilgrimage of the scenes of his childhood.

Ah! Mother Salé might threaten him from afar now, run after him, close at his heels, old Jack would not fear her any longer; he even felt himself strong enough to carry her faggot for her. But he was much disappointed at not being allowed to go to the Rivals' house, and say good-by to Cécile.

"You see, my dear, after the scene that took place between the gentlemen, it would not be proper to go," Charlotte replied to all the pleadings of her son. At last, the very day before Jack's departure, flushed with the evil joy of his triumph, d'Argenton consented to the child's taking leave of his friends.

He went in the evening. There was no one in the hall, no one in the pharmacy, whose shutters were closed. A streak of light came from the library, or what was called the library, an immense garret littered with dictionaries, atlases, medical works, and the big red-backed volumes of the Panckouke collection. The doctor was there busily packing a box of books.

"Ah, it is you!" he said to the child. "I felt sure you would not go away without coming to say good-by to me. They would n't let you come, eh? I 'm somewhat to blame for that. I was too quick with my tongue. My wife gave me a pretty talking to. By the bye, perhaps you know she went away yesterday with the child. I have sent them to the Pyrenees to spend a month with my

sister. The little one was not very well. I was imbecile enough to tell her of your departure too abruptly. Ah, they say children do not feel things, and her grief is deeper than our own."

He was talking to Jack as one talks to a man. But at the thought that his little friend was ill on his account and that he must go away without seeing her, old Jack wanted very much to cry like a child.

He looked at the books scattered about, the big dreary room dimly lighted by a single candle placed upon the table side by side with the doctor's grog and his brandy-bottle, for he had taken advantage of his wife's absence to return to his old habits aboard ship. His eye was very bright, and he was unusually animated as he rummaged among his books, blowing off the dust from their old edges, and emptying a whole corner of his library into the open box at his feet.

"Do you know what I am doing, my boy?"

"No, Monsieur Rivals."

"I am picking out some books for you, good old books which you are to carry away with you and to read, do you hear? You are to read them just as soon there is a minute to spare. Always remember, my child, that books are our true friends. We can always turn to them during the great disappointments and hardships of life, and always find something. As for myself, when my sorrow came to me, if I had not had my books, I should have died long before this. Look at this little box, my boy. There's a nice lot for you!

I shall not promise that you will understand at first what they all mean. But that does not matter — you are to read them just the same. Even those you do not understand will let in a little light upon you. Promise me you will read them."

"I promise, Monsieur Rivals."

"There, now the box is packed. Can you carry it yourself? No, it is too heavy; I will send it to you to-morrow morning. Well, come here, and let me bid you farewell."

And the good man took Jack's head in his big hands and kissed him energetically two or three times. "That is for me — and that is for Cécile who is not here," he added with a kindly smile, and as he closed the door Jack heard him whisper, "Poor child, poor child."

The same words that he had heard at Vaugirard where the Fathers lived. But now he understood why they pitied him.

The next day there was great excitement at Les Aulnettes over Jack's departure.

The baggage was loaded upon a cart standing at the door. Labassindre, in the most extraordinary rig, as if he was starting on an expedition across the pampas, — very high gaiters, a green velvet jacket, sombrero, a leathern bag slung across his shoulder, came and went, practising his note. The poet was both solemn and radiant — solemn because he felt he was accomplishing a humanitarian duty he owed society, radiant because the boy's departure overjoyed him. Charlotte em-

braced Jack again and again, looking to see that nothing was wanting.

No, nothing was wanting. He was perhaps a trifle too well clad for a working man, attired in that scant costume he had worn the day of the consecrated bread, being one of those unfortunate beings who grow too fast and are condemned during their adolescence to endure the constant inconvenience of clothing they have outgrown.

"You will take good care of him, Monsieur Labassindre?"

"I will guard him as if he were my note, madame."

"Jack!"

"Mamma!"

There was one last passionate embrace. Charlotte sobbed. The child, however, did not betray his emotion. The thought that he was going to work for his mother filled this old Jack with fortitude. At the bottom of the road he turned to look back once more, and to carry away fixed in his vision, the woods, the house, the orchard, and the face of the woman who was smiling at him through her tears.

"You must write to me often, my Jack," cried the mother. And the poet with deep solemnity — "Remember, Jack, life is not a romance."

Life is not a romance! but it seemed one, at least for the wretch who was speaking.

To be convinced of that, one glance was enough, as he stood on the threshold of his little house with its device, leaning upon his Charlotte, amid

the roses clambering over its front, assuming a pretentious pose that reminded one of some romantic chromo-lithograph, and overflowing with satisfied egotism to such an extent that he even forgot his hatred for a moment, and with his hand waved a paternal and gracious farewell to the child he had just cast adrift.

PART II.

I.

INDRET.

THE singer rose and suddenly stood upright in the boat in which he was crossing the Loire with the child, a little above Paimbœuf, opening his arms wide as if to enfold the entire river in an energetic embrace.

"Look at that, old boy! Is n't it splendid?"

In spite of the grotesque and commonplace in the admiration of this comedian, the beautiful sight that spread itself before them was worthy of admiration.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. The July sun, — a sun of molten silver, spread upon the river its long luminous trail. It filled the air with palpitating vibrations, a mist of light through which the restless and silent life of the river appeared, gleaming with mirage-like swiftness. Tall sails were seen bathed in the dazzling yellow light of the river, scudding away as if in flight. They were great barges coming from Noirmoutiers loaded to the very top with white salt sparkling with innumerable spangles, and manned by picturesque crews: men with the big three-cornered hat of the

Breton salt-worker, women whose big quilted caps, like huge butterflies, were white and glittering as the salt itself. Then there were coasters like floating drays, their decks heaped with sacks of grain and casks, tugs dragging along interminable lines of barges, or some Nantais three-master come from the other side of the globe, reaching home again after two years' absence, and sailing up the river with a slow motion, solemn almost, as if carrying in its onward movement the silent contemplation of the familiar land and the mysterious poetry attaching to things come from afar. In spite of the July heat, a breeze was blowing, lending life to the fair scene, for a strong wind had sprung up full of the delightful freshness of the open sea, so that one felt that beyond those onward rushing waves, which had already lost the calm, the tranquillity of still waters lay the sea-green of the limitless ocean, its billows, spray, and tempests.

"And Indret, where is it?" asked Jack.

"There, that island in front of us."

Through the silver mist that enveloped the island, Jack saw indistinctly lines of tall poplars, and high chimneys whence ascended thick clouds of foul, black smoke which spread over everything, darkening even the sky above it. At the same time he heard a loud resounding clamor, the regular beat of the hammers falling upon wrought and sheet iron, muffled sounds and clear ones, variously echoed by the sonorous water — and above everything else, a continuous perpetual rumbling, as if the island had been some great

steamer, stopped and groaning, moving its wheels though still at anchor, and its machinery, though it had not taken a step onward.

As the boat approached the shore, slowly, very slowly, for the tide was strong and hard to row against, the child distinguished some long, low-roofed buildings with blackened walls stretching upon all sides with monotonous uniformity, and on the banks of the river, as far as eye could see, long lines of enormous boilers, painted with red lead, the startling color lending a fantastic effect. Government transports, steam-launches, lying along the quay, waited till the boilers were placed on board by means of a big crane close at hand, which from the distance resembled a gigantic gibbet.

At the foot of this gibbet stood a man watching the approach of the boat.

"It is Roudic," said the singer, and from the deepest depths he brought forth a formidable "Hurrah!" which was heard in spite of all the noise of the boiler-factory.

"Is it you, old chap?"

"Blue blazes, yes, it is I. Are there two such notes as mine under the canopy?"

The boat reached the bank, and the two brothers sprang into each other's arms with a tremendous grip.

They resembled each other, but Roudic was much the elder, and wanted the fleshiness which singers on the stage so soon attain through the practice of trills and long notes. Instead of wearing a pointed beard like his brother, he was shaven,

sunburnt, and his béret, a blue woollen cap that had seen better days, was set upon a genuine Breton head. His face was tanned by the sea and looked as if chiselled out of the solid rock, and his small eyes had a keen expression which was sharpened by close attention to the minute details of a fitter's work.

"And how are you all at home?" asked Labassindre. "How are Clarisse, Zenaïde, every one?"

"All are well, God be praised. Ah, this is our new apprentice. He 's a pretty little chap, but he does n't look very strong."

"Strong as an ox, my dear boy, and warranted by the first doctors in Paris."

"So much the better, for ours is a rough business. And now, if you wish, we will go and see the manager."

They followed a long walk, shaded by fine trees which soon changed into a little street bordered by neat white houses, each the counterpart of its neighbor. This was where a number of the workmen of the factory lived, the foremen and those directly under them. The others lived on the opposite bank, at Montagne or Basse-Indre.

At this hour all was silent, the life and movement of the place concentrated within the factory.

And except for the washing hanging to dry at the windows, except for flower-pots ranged near the panes, a child's cry now and then, and the musical rocking of a cradle heard through some half-open door, it would not have been suspected that the place was inhabited.

"Ah the flag is down," said the singer, as he reached the door leading to the workshops. "Many a fright that cursed flag has given me before now."

And he explained to old Jack that five minutes after the hands arrived to begin work, the flag over the entrance was lowered, announcing that the factory doors were closed. So much worse for those who were tardy. They were marked absent, and if this happened a third time they were discharged.

While he was explaining these things his brother conferred with the watchman at the gate, and they were permitted to enter the establishment. The noise within was terrific; groanings, whistlings, grindings, varying but never lessening, echoed from the great triangular-roofed shops standing at intervals upon an incline intersected by numerous railways.

An iron city.

Their footsteps resounded as they walked over plates of metal, incrusted in the earth. They made their way amid heaps of bar iron, pig iron, ingots of copper, among old guns brought thither to be melted down, all rusty on the outside, blackened within, and still almost smoking, old fire-belchers about to perish by fire.

Roudic pointed out, as they passed along, the various quarters of the works. "See, that is the setting-up room, the workshops of the big lathe, the little lathe, the braziery, the forges, the foundry." He had to shout his information, so overpowering was the noise.

Jack, quite dazed, looked with amazement through the workshop doors, almost all of which were open because of the heat, and saw a swarm of upraised arms, blackened faces, and machinery in motion, in the darkness of a pit, dull and heavy, lighted by flashes of red light.

Gusts of hot air, smells of coal, burned clay and melting iron filled the place, mingled with an impalpable, black dust, sharp, burning, and scintillating in the sun, with the glitter of coal that may become diamond. But what gave a lifelike, breathless, hurried appearance to all this mighty activity, was a perpetual commotion of the earth and the atmosphere, a continual trepidation which seemed like the effort of some huge beast concealed beneath the works, whose groanings and burning respirations burst through the yawning chimneys. Fearing he might appear too much of a novice, Jack dared not ask what made this noise, which had impressed him even at a distance.

Suddenly they stood before an ancient château of the time of the League, sombre, flanked with great towers, whose bricks were blackened by smoke from the factory till they had lost their primitive color.

"Here we are at the office," said Roudic.

And turning to his brother, he added: "Do you wish to go in?"

"I should say so. I shall not be sorry to see the 'boss' again, and to show him that in spite of his predictions we have become a little of a swell."

He strutted along in his velvet jacket, proud of his

yellow boots and the bag slung across his shoulder. Roudic said nothing in reply, but he seemed somewhat embarrassed.

They passed under the low postern-gate, and entered the ancient buildings, a number of small, irregular, badly-lighted rooms where clerks were busily writing without pausing to raise their heads. In the last room a man of severe and cold aspect sat at a desk directly under a high window.

"Ah, is that you, Father Roudic?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I come to show you the new apprentice, and to thank you for —"

"So this is the little prodigy. Good-day, my boy. We hear you have a real talent for mechanics. That's good."

Then after eying the boy more attentively for a moment, he remarked, "But I say, Roudic. He does n't look very strong, this youngster. Is he sickly?"

"No, monsieur. On the contrary, I am assured he is remarkably strong."

"Remarkably," repeated Labassindre, stepping forward, and seeing the astonished glance of the director, he thought it well to let the former know who he was, that he had left the works six years before to enter the theatre of Nantes, and later the Opera in Paris.

"Oh, I remember you perfectly," said the manager in a tone of the utmost indifference, and rose abruptly to cut short the conversation.

"Take your apprentice, Father Roudic, and try

to make a good workman of him for us. With your help, there will be no trouble."

The singer, quite vexed at having produced no impression, went out crestfallen. Roudic remained behind in the office, and exchanged a few words in a low tone with his chief. After that the two men and the child went downstairs again, with very different feelings. Jack was meditating upon those words, "He is not strong enough," which every one had repeated since his arrival. Labassindre was digesting his humiliation, and the fitter himself seemed to be preoccupied.

When they were outside, Labassindre inquired of his brother, "Did he say anything to vex you? He is a surlier dog than he was in my time."

Roudic shook his head sadly. "Oh no; he was speaking to me of Charlot, our poor sister's son, who is giving us a great deal of trouble."

"The Nantais gives you trouble?" asked the singer. "What 's the matter with him?"

"Why, since the mother died, he has become a regular tippler, playing, drinking, and running into debt. And yet he gets good pay for designing, and has not his equal at that in all Indret. But what can be done, when everything is swallowed up at cards? He cannot seem to control the passion, for every one has tried a hand at breaking him of it, the manager, myself, my wife. Nothing does any good. He sheds tears, is in despair, promises he will never do it again, but the moment he gets his pay, whiz! he is off, for Nantes, to gamble it away. I have paid his debts for him many a time,

but now I will do so no more. There 's my house to look after, you know. And Zénaïde is growing to be quite a girl, and she will have to be settled in life. Poor child! When I remember that I once thought of marrying her to her cousin! A happy life of it she would have had! But she herself did not wish it, though he's a good-looking fellow, and as wheedling as they make them; ah, women always have more good sense than we men. Well — the rest of it is, we are trying to have him sent away, so that he may break loose from bad company. The manager was telling me that he had found a place for him at Guérigny, in the Nièvre. But I do not know whether the scamp will want to go. There must be some affair that keeps him here. What do you think, old chap? You might have a little talk with him about it this evening. He would listen to you, perhaps."

"I 'll do it, never fear," said Labassindre, with an air of great importance.

As they talked, they passed along the railed streets about the ironworks; at this hour they were crowded, for the day had ended, and a throng of men, of all sizes and trades, streamed forth; a motley of blouses and jackets, the coats of designers mingling with the garb of the overseers.

The gravity which marked this cessation of labor impressed Jack. He contrasted this picture with the noise, the jostling crowds that enlivened the streets of Paris at the exit from the workshops, a crowd as noisy as a troop of children let out of school. Here there was all the order and disci-

pline that would be found aboard a government-ship.

A warm steam floated over this swarming population, a mist that the sea-breeze had not yet scattered, which in the motionlessness of that July night rested upon the town like a heavy cloud. The hushed workshops evaporated the odors of the forge. The steam whistled through the gutters, the sweat poured from all foreheads; the panting sound Jack had heard a while before had ceased, and those two thousand chests, weary from the day's work, could breathe freely once more.

As he passed through the crowd Labassindre was recognized at once.

"Halloa, old boy. And how are you?"

They surrounded him, gripped his hand, one saying to another:

"That's Roudic's brother, who earns a hundred thousand francs a year just by singing."

Every one wished to see him, for the supposed fortune of the sometime blacksmith was one of the legends of the foundry, and since his departure more than one young comrade had hunted in the bottom of his throat to see whether he too might not possess that famous note worth millions.

In the midst of this crowd of admiring friends, who were still more overcome by the theatrical costume he wore, the singer strutted on, with his head aloft, talking and laughing loudly, tossing greetings on all sides, — good-mornings to Father Such-a-one or Mother So-and-so, looking towards

the little houses brightened by women's faces at the windows, towards the taverns and cookshops which filled that part of Indret, where hucksters of all sorts had their quarters, spreading their wares in the open air, blouses, shoes, hats, silk kerchiefs, an ambulatory collection of small wares such as is seen in the neighborhood of camps, barracks, and factories.

As Jack passed the wares thus exhibited, he fancied he saw a familiar face, a smile reaching him through these groups of people, but it was merely a sudden flash, a momentary vision, lost again in the ever-changing tide of people which moved on and on, through that great city of toil, spreading itself upon the opposite bank of the river, passing in long boats plying busily, as heavily-laden and numerous as if they were ferrying an army across.

Whilst the busy crowd was dispersing, nightfall had come. The sun was setting. The wind freshened, fluttering the poplars like palms. Impressive it was to see the toiling island restored to nature for the night, and finding repose. As the smoke disappeared, masses of verdure appeared between the shops. The sound of the river washing against the banks was heard, and the swallows skimming along the surface of the water, uttering tiny cries, circled about the great boilers, ranged in line along the quay.

Roudic's house was the first of a long row of new buildings looking like barracks, in a broad street behind the château. A very young woman stand-

ing at the entrance of the door, which was reached by a few steps, was listening with bent head to a big fellow who was leaning against the wall, and talking with great animation. Jack thought at first that this was Roudic's daughter, but he heard the old foreman say to the singer:

"Look! my wife must be giving her nephew a good talking to now."

The child remembered that Labassindre had said that his brother had married a second time, some years before. The woman was young, quite attractive, tall, and supple; her face was gentle in expression and there was about her a certain suggestion of weakness and clinging dependence, that bent attitude which may be noticed at times in women weighed down by the heavy masses of their hair. Contrary to the Breton fashion, she was bareheaded, and her skirt of light material, her little black apron made her look more like the wife of some clerk than of a peasant or a workman.

"Is n't she pretty, eh?" asked Roudic, who had paused a few steps away, with his brother, nudging the latter's elbow, his face radiant with pride.

"I compliment you, my boy; she is even handsomer than before her marriage."

The others continued to talk, so much absorbed in their conversation that they heard and saw nothing.

Then the singer removed his sombrero with a magnificent flourish and began singing in the open street in a resounding voice:

"Salut, demeure chaste et pure,
Où se devine la présence —"

"Oh, there's my uncle!" remarked the one they called the Nantais, turning around.

Effusive greetings were exchanged for a moment. The apprentice was introduced, the Nantais bestowing upon him a disdainful glance, while Madame Roudic said gently: "I hope that you will be happy with us, my child."

Then they entered.

Behind the house, which did not extend back very far, was a little dried, sunburnt garden full of vegetables and flowers gone to seed. Here a table was set. Other gardens just like this, and separated from each other by trellises only, stretched along a small arm of the Loire, which at this part of its course looked like the Bièvre, with linen and nets hung up to dry, with hemp steeping, and littered with the rubbish of all these working men's houses.

"And Zénaïde?" asked Labassindre, as soon as they were seated at table under the arbor.

"We must eat our soup without waiting for her," said Roudic. "She will be here soon; she is working to-day at the château. She has become a famous dressmaker, I can tell you."

"Is she working at the manager's?" exclaimed Labassindre, who had taken the former's reception deeply to heart. "Well, I wish her joy. Of all the proud, arrogant fellows!"

And he began to inveigh against the manager, assisted by the Nantais, who had reasons of his

own for his hatred. Uncle and nephew were admirably adapted to each other, and could not fail to agree. Both of them, on the boundary that separates the artisan from the artist, had just enough talent to remain isolated in their own environment, but with an early education, habits, and tendencies that prevented their leaving it. Two European hybrids, belonging to the most dangerous, the most unhappy of all races, filled with envy and hate, and impotent ambitions.

"You are mistaken, he is an excellent man," said Father Roudic, defending his chief, whom he loved. "A little severe perhaps in his discipline, but when one has two thousand workmen under him, that cannot be helped. Without it, things could never go on. Is n't that so, Clarisse?"

He addressed himself to his wife at every turn, for his antagonists were both good talkers, and he himself was not very eloquent. But Clarisse was busied with her dinner, and showed in her manner all the indolence of one who is absorbed in something else, whose hands are slow and whose glance is wandering, because the absent will is preoccupied with some inward conflict.

Fortunately, assistance came to Roudic, and assistance of no mean order. Zénaïde entered, a fat little roly-poly, red-faced and out of breath, and at once plunged into the argument with the utmost heat. She was not pretty to look at, short, thick-set, and unsymmetrical of figure, resembling her father. The white coif of Guérande formed a thick diadem about her head. The short petticoat,

supported upon her hips by a pad, the little shawl fastened quite low on the shoulders, made her broad, massive figure seem even larger. She looked like a clothes-press. But in the honest girl's heavy eyebrows and square-cut chin could be read force, energy, and determination as plainly as helplessness and dependence were betrayed upon the face of her stepmother.

Without taking long enough even to remove the big pair of scissors hanging from her waist like a sword, the bib of her apron still sprinkled with pins and threaded needles, forming a sort of cuirass upon her brave little breast, she seated herself at Jack's side, and proceeded to make war at once, nothing daunted by the eloquence of the singer or the designer. What she had to say was said in a quiet, good-natured voice, with straightforward simplicity; but when she spoke to her cousin her voice and glance betrayed anger.

The Nantais pretended not to notice it, took it all good-naturedly, and responded with pleasantries that did not make her more amiable.

"And to think that I wanted to make a match for them!" said Father Roudic, half in jest, half in earnest, as he listened to their disputing.

"I was not the one that declined," said the Nantais with a laugh, glancing at his cousin.

"No, it was I," said the Bretonne, drawing her terrible brows together, and without lowering her gaze. "And I am thankful that I did. For when I see how things are going, I know that I should be at the bottom of the river by this time, just

from grief at having you for a husband, my fine cousin!"

She said this with such an accent that the fine cousin was quite disconcerted for a moment.

Clarisse too seemed somewhat disturbed, and her tearful glance looked beseechingly towards her stepdaughter.

"Listen, Charlot," said Roudic to change the conversation, "I can give you proof that the manager is kindly disposed. He has found a magnificent place for you in the works at Guérigny, and he asked me to tell you about it."

There was a moment's pause, the Nantais showing no alacrity in responding. Roudic persisted:

"Observe carefully, my boy, that you will have far more favorable terms there than here, and that — that —"

He looked at his brother, his wife, and his daughter, seeking for an end to his sentence.

"And that it would be better to take oneself off than have to be sent away, is n't that so, Uncle?" asked the Nantais brutally. "True, but for my own part, I insist they shall dismiss me if they have had enough of my services; they shall not treat me as a *chouffiqueur*[1] who must be gotten rid of without dropping him from the pay-roll."

"By Heaven, he 's right!" said Labassindre, pounding the table energetically.

And the battle began again. Roudic returned often to the charge; but the Nantais held his

[1] Bungler.

ground. Zénaïde was silent, but her eyes were never for a moment removed from her stepmother, who left the table several times, although there was nothing more to be brought in.

"And you, mamma," she said at last, "do you not think Charlot should accept this position?"

"Why certainly, certainly," said Madame Roudic quickly. "I think he would do well to accept."

The Nantais rose from the table, gloomy and much excited. "Very well," he said, "since every one will be glad to see me go, I know what to do. In a week I shall be away from here. Now don't let us talk any more about it."

It had grown dark, and a light was brought. The neighboring gardens were lighted also; laughter and clatter of dishes was heard in the foliage and all the vulgar open-air sounds of a suburban public-house and tea-garden combined.

Labassindre, in the midst of the general embarrassment, had taken the field himself, monopolizing conversation, and raking up all his musty theories of Gymnase fame, concerning the rights of the working man, the future of the People, the tyranny of capital. He produced a tremendous effect, and his old comrades who had come to pass the evening with the singer, were in ecstasies at his ready eloquence which was not in the least hindered by the forgotten dialect, and was more easily understood because of its commonplaceness.

Those old-time companions came in their working-clothes, dingy-looking and tired; Roudic invited them to be seated as soon as they en-

tered; they sat lifeless and inert around the table, pouring out great draughts of wine which they drank down in one big gulp, panting and puffing noisily, and wiping their mouths on the corner of a sleeve, glass in one hand, pipe in the other. Even among the Failures, Jack had never seen such manners, and at times some rustic speech shocked him with its frank coarseness. They did not talk like other people, but made use of a sort of jargon which sounded ugly and vulgar to the child. A machine was called *bécane*, the heads of the shops were *contre-coups*, bad workmanship was *chouflique*. Intense sadness took possession of Jack at sight of this group of working men which was constantly changing, no one paying the slightest attention to their comings or goings.

"And I shall grow to be like that," he thought to himself, terrified.

During the evening Roudic presented him to the foreman of the forging room, named Lebescam, under whose orders the child was to begin his apprenticeship. This Lebescam, a hairy Cyclops, whose beard seemed to reach even to his eyes, made a wry face at sight of his future charge in his fine array, with such slender wrists, such very white hands. In spite of his thirteen years, there was something very girlish in Jack's appearance. His fair hair, although it had been cut short, had still a pretty ripple given it by the caressing touch of his mother's fingers. And the delicate, distinguished air of his whole person, the aristocratic

bearing tnat had irritated d'Argenton so often, seemed still more noticeable amid the vulgar surroundings where he now found himself.

Lebescam thought he looked very delicate, rather "sickly" in fact.

"Oh, it is only the fatigue of the journey, and his fine gentleman's rig that makes him look like that," answered honest Roudic, and, turning to his wife, he added: "You will find him a blouse and overalls. Come, wife, he must be shown to his room at once. The child is falling asleep, and to-morrow he must be up at five. Do you hear, my little fellow? I shall wake you exactly at five."

"Yes, Monsieur Roudic."

But before retiring, Jack had to take farewell of Labassindre, who insisted upon a last bumper specially in his honor.

"Your health, old boy, the working man's health! Remember, it is I who tell you so, the day you choose, you shall be masters of the world."

"Masters of the world? Oh, that's a good deal!" said Roudic with a smile. "If one were only sure of owning a little house in his old age, and a few acres safe from the sea, he need n't ask anything more."

While they were talking, Jack, escorted by the two women, entered the house. It was not large, and was composed of a ground floor cut in two parts, one of which was called the parlor, and was ornamented by an arm-chair, and some large shells decorating the chimneypiece. Overhead the arrangement was the same. There was no paper on

the walls, but a coating of whitewash which had been frequently renewed. There were big canopied beds, their curtains of old flowered chintz, pink and pale blue, trimmed with ball-fringe. In Zénaïde's chamber the bed formed a sort of cupboard in the wall, according to the ancient Breton fashion.

The room contained a clothes-press in carved oak, with iron finishings; images of saints hung everywhere, and rosaries of all sorts, of ivory, shell, American berries; this was the furniture of the room. In the corner a screen, decorated with big flowers, hid the ladder, a little, unsteady, movable staircase that led to the loft where the apprentice was to sleep.

"This is where I sleep," said Zénaïde, "and you, my boy, are above, just over my head. But you need n't mind about that. You can tramp about or dance, if you like. I am a heavy sleeper."

A big lantern was lighted; then he said "Good night," and climbed the ladder to his attic, a little hole upon which the sun beat so fiercely that the heat was baked into the walls, concentrated and stifling. A narrow skylight which opened in the roof, let in a little air. Certainly the dormitory of the Gymnase Moronval had prepared Jack for any strange domicile, but, at least, when he was there, there were others to share his misery with him. Here he had not even Mâdou — poor Mâdou — or anyone else. It was the complete solitude of a garret open only to the sky, like a small boat on the open sea.

The child looked at the sloping ceiling, against which he had already rapped his head; an Épinal print was fastened to the wall with four pins. He saw there his working uniform laid upon the bed, in readiness for his apprenticeship, which was to begin to-morrow, the big clumsy blue canvas trousers — called *une salopette*, the smock so strongly stitched upon the shoulders to resist the strain of the active arms encased in it. As it lay upon the coverlet, its very folds seemed to express exhaustion and hopelessness, as if some one, utterly weary, had stretched himself just where the exhausted limbs chanced to fall.

Jack thought: "That is I — I am to be like that!" And while he gazed sadly at himself, there rose from the garden below, the indistinct sounds of the talk that follows after drinking, mingled with the murmur of an animated discussion in the chamber below, between Zénaïde and her stepmother.

The young girl's voice, low and deep as a man's, could scarcely be distinguished, but Madame Roudic's, on the contrary, was clear and liquid, and at this moment still more resonant because there were tears in it.

"Then, for heaven's sake, let him go!" she said, more passionately than one would have thought possible, noting the ordinary listlessness of her attitude.

Zénaïde's firm, severe tone seemed to soften; and then the two women kissed each other.

Beneath the arbor Labassindre was singing one

of those old sentimental ditties so much affected by working men,

"Towards the shores of Fran-ance,
Lightly row"

And all caught up the chorus, with a drawling accent—

"Ro-o-ow, ro-o-ow
Singing, row,
Lightly row,
Zephyrs gently blow."

Jack felt that he was in a new world, and one in which success would never be his. He was appalled, feeling between himself and these people a gulf that could not be bridged, an impassable abyss. The thought of his mother was the one thought that sustained and reassured him.

His mother!

He thought of her as he gazed towards the sky filled with stars, those millions of golden points pricked upon the blue square of sky seen from his window. He had stood there a long while, the little house was wrapped in slumber and silence, when suddenly he heard a long tremulous sigh, shaken by sobs, that told him Madame Roudic too was weeping at her window, that his was not the only sorrow that kept watch through that beautiful night.

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